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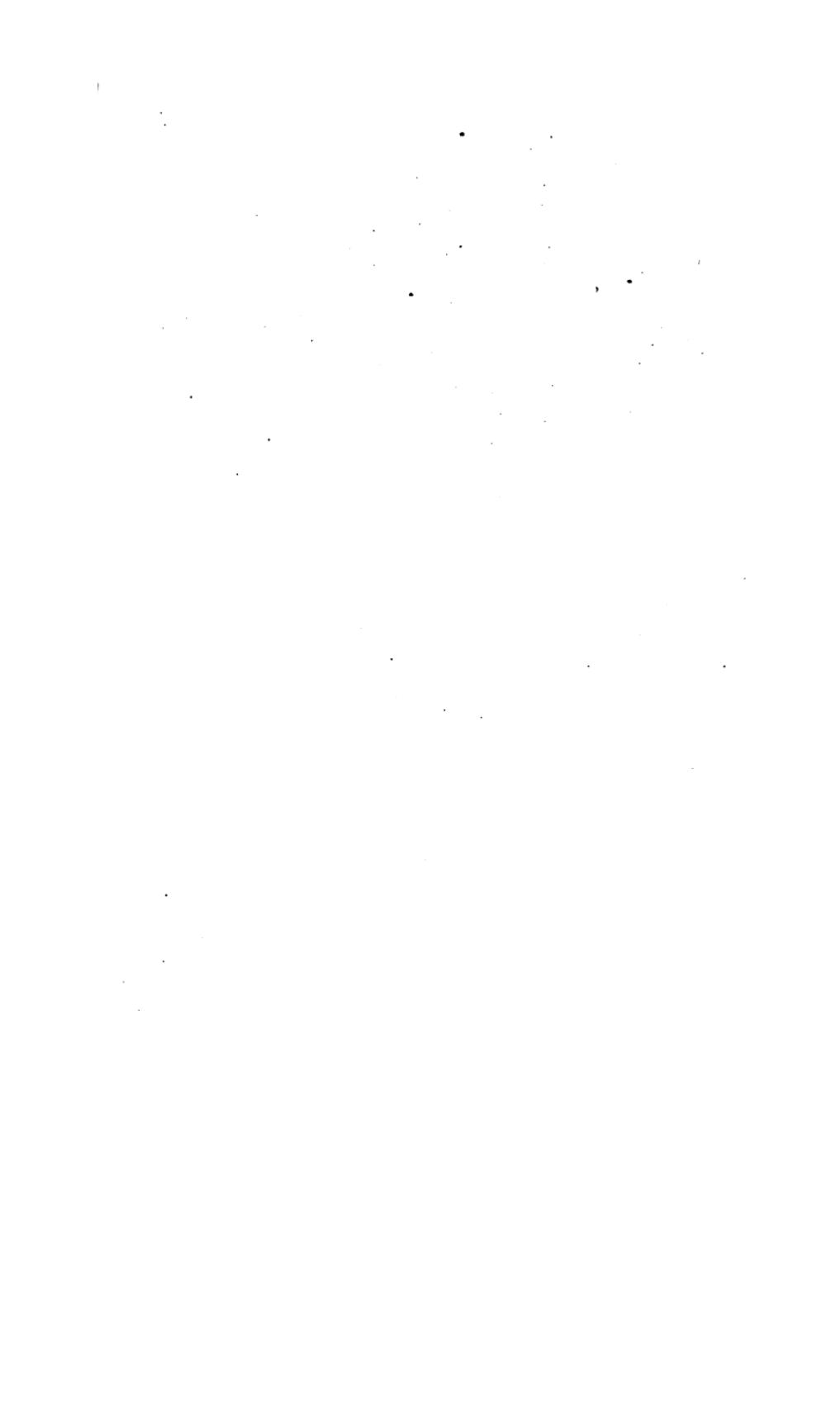


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THE

EXCLUSIVES.



IN TWO VOLUMES.

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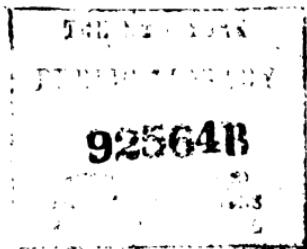
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THE EXCLUSIVES.

CHAPTER I.

RETROSPECTION.

WHEN Lady Hamlet Vernon drew Lord Albert d'Esterre aside, at Lady Tilney's supper party, it was, he conceived, with an intention of explaining to him the words contained in her note at Restormel alluding to Lady Adeline Seymour—and he was confirmed in this idea by the violent agitation which her manner betrayed, although she strove to retain that composure which the circumstances of the time and place particularly demanded. For several minutes after they had sat down, she seemed labouring for breath; and Lord Albert, notwithstanding his own anxiety and impatience felt exceedingly for her distress.

“ My dear Lady Hamlet Vernon,” he said, “ I beseech you be not thus agitated; remember, whatever you have to say, however painful it may be to me to hear, I am certain that it must be from friendly motives alone that you make such communication, and I must always feel grateful to you for your intention; but keep me no longer in suspense I entreat, for I am prepared for whatever you may have to tell me.”

“ I have nothing to tell you, Lord Albert.”

“ What do you mean? what, can you possibly intend to disappoint me; and, having so cruelly excited my feelings, cast them back upon me to prey upon themselves? No, I never can believe you so inconsequent; so very—”

“ Stay, Lord Albert, and before you condemn, hear me.—It is true I was on the point of betraying a trust—of revealing a secret—of becoming *really dishonourable*—for what? for the sole purpose of befriending you—for the sole

purpose of snatching *you* from a danger which it was then time to prevent your falling into ; but since that moment is past for ever—since it is now in vain that I should prove useful to you by being false to another, my lips must for ever be sealed."

"Strange and unaccountable mystery ! What, you will not tell me—you will not endeavour to warn me against a danger which hangs over me—is this friendship ? How can *you* know that the time is past for pointing out to me such danger ? How can *you* be so thoroughly acquainted with the events of my life—the secrets of my heart, as first to imagine my fate *was* in your hands, and then suddenly be equally well assured it is *no longer* ? No, I cannot conceive there is any friendship in such conduct."

"Ah," said Lady Hamlet Vernon, sighing, "I see you are like all your sex ; you receive the devotion of a heart as a thing of course ; you take into no consideration the pain, the remorse I felt, at the idea of becoming false to a trust for your sake, when I thought that by so doing I might save you from misfortune. And now that I tell you the time is gone by when I might possibly have been of use, even by the sacrifice of my own integrity, you still wish for that sacrifice, although it can avail you nothing—is this generous ?" Lord Albert felt confused ; he was even moved by the look, the air, the words of Lady Hamlet Vernon ; but still the disappointment wrung his heart, and jealousy, with every other feeling, goaded him on to press for a disclosure of the secret.

"I am not ungrateful, indeed I am not ; I feel deeply the kind interest you take in me ; but if that interest does not sleep, or rather if it is not extinguished, I still plead to be made acquainted with a circumstance so very nearly affecting my welfare ; and when I say that your disclosing it to me would be like keeping it in another casket, surely, surely you will not deny me."

"In this respect, my dear Lord Albert, I alone can be the judge, and even at the risk of losing your good opinion, or rather of losing your friendship for the time being, I must persist in remaining silent." There was a long pause, which was at last interrupted by Lady Hamlet Vernon resuming the conversation.

"Whatever may be your opinion of me, I must, ere our intercourse altogether ceases, touch upon one subject, which

I believe to be the prime object of your life, and that to which all your views tend—I mean the noble career which lies open to your ambition ; may you pursue it with unbounded success ; but remember, that you are not likely to do so if you have any secondary interest to clog and drag you back. If domestic troubles, at least domestic cares, obtrude themselves upon your higher aims, what a terrible hindrance to your plans they must of necessity become. Think well, my dear Lord Albert, of this—for *le roman de la vie* is soon over, you know, but life itself goes on to the end ; and whatever women do, men should look to that alone with a providing care. We, who are creatures born to suffer (at least all women who live as most women do, the slaves of your sex), we indeed may live upon that illusion, which destroys while it delights ; but it is not in your nature to do so ; public concerns—public applause—public success—facts, not feelings, must fill up the measure of a man's existence. Think, then, what it is to have these great ends marred, defeated, by some minor power that corrodes and destroys in detail those thoughts, those actions, which, if unshackled by petty duties, would raise you to high consideration and power ; but if tied to a partner wholly a stranger to your feelings and pursuits, she must, however amiable in herself, ultimately poison all your happiness."

Lord Albert had listened to Lady Hamlet Vernon without a wish to interrupt her, and with deep and fixed attention, painfully dwelt upon every word she uttered ; he could not remain in ignorance of the drift of her words, and they pierced him like swords, yet still he remained silent.

"If," continued Lady Hamlet Vernon, "a woman shares her husband's feelings, enters into his views, goes along with him, not merely from duty but from habit and inclination, in all his interests, then indeed it is possible such a woman might forward, and not impede his prospects ; but where habits, principles, and prejudices, have all tended to form a different character, and above all, where bigotry has fastened chains on the mind wholly destructive of any active or useful pursuits, the probability is, that wretchedness to both ensues." Lord Albert no longer affected to misunderstand her, and replied,

"Every thing you have said has been in allusion to my approaching union with Lady Adeline Seymour, an engage-

eye or came to his ear, with the glitter and the buzz of undistinguishable lights and sounds. He went through the forms of the place and scene with the precision of an automaton, and when the supper ended he followed Lady Hamlet Vernon about like her shadow, sometimes absorbed in the deepest concentration of thought, sometimes endeavouring to revert to their former conversation, which had been so abruptly, and to him so unopportune broken off; eager to renew its discussion, as well as to elicit a disclosure (regardless of his solemn promise) of that part of the subject on which she refused all explanation.

In both, however, he wholly failed; and having been obliged, although reluctantly, to part from her for that time, he handed Lady Hamlet Vernon to her carriage and bent his way home. He felt it a relief to be alone, in order to take a review more collectedly of what was passing in his own breast: but yet, when he commenced the task, he found a contradiction of thoughts and feelings which were so involved that for a time he yielded to them, and they alternately swayed him in opposite directions, without his being able to come to any decision.

On considering the length of time, and the intimate footing on which Mr. Foley had lived at Dunmelraise (notwithstanding the peculiar circumstances in which he was placed, as the son of Lady Dunmelraise's dearest friend, and her own *protégé*), on recalling his descriptions and praises of Lady Adeline when they met at Restormel, he thought he saw a confirmation of his worst fears. What, he asked himself, could induce a young man to seek so lonely and retired a situation but love? And Lady Dunmelraise he thought must have approved his views, or she would not have suffered such an intimacy to subsist, even though as her friend's child she received him under her roof; at least it was evident that she chose to give her daughter an opportunity of turning her affections from that quarter to which they had been originally directed. Adeline's letters, too, so equable in their expression of calm content, so lavish in Mr. Foley's praise, so minute in her detail of his way of thinking and manner of feeling, showed that had she not been more than commonly interested in him, she could not have thus busied herself with analyzing his character.

"It is clear," he said, "Adeline does not love me; and

her mother is no longer anxious in consequence that our union should take place!" While this idea prevailed he was desirous immediately to break off the engagement; formed a thousand plans for doing this, in such a way as to appear disinterested and honorable in their opinion; and worked himself up to a belief, for the moment, that he was only acting with that refinement and generosity due to his own feelings as well as to Lady Adeline's, by losing no time in putting this resolve into execution, and then she would be free. But for himself, would the same step afford him the same advantage? Would his heart be really free? were there no strong ties that bound him to Adeline? no habit of attachment formed in his breast, though she had broken through the one, and apparently could never have cherished the other? Would he, in short, be free, though she were? Could he turn the current of his affections at once towards another object; could he accept the heart, even were it her's to bestow, of the person who had shown such an interest in his welfare; of one whose beauty was enhanced by the deep expression which played over her features—whose manners, talents, character, were alike formed—could he make her his wife? Again he paused at that title—it had never been associated with any save Adeline, and when coupled now with another, it made him start from his own thoughts, as though he were guilty in indulging them.

Struck at this idea, and with the conviction of what would be the state of his own mind were he indeed at once to let Lady Adeline loose from her engagement, his feelings and his reasonings took another course.

"Should I be justified," he asked himself, "in the steps I am proposing, without further proofs of Adeline's inconstancy? My surmises perhaps have ground sufficient, but something more than surmise is due to her. It is true, I am told I shall never be happy with her," (and he shuddered as he repeated the words to himself); "but I very much doubt if ever I can be happy without her. My own conduct, too, lately—what has it been? Has it not carried with it proofs of coldness and neglect? Why should I expect to receive that constant and ardent devotion, which I have showed no anxiety to retain; and what, on my part, has occasioned this passive indifference? Has it not been a growing partiality for the society of another—and was this Adeline's

fault?" He dwelt on this idea for some moments, and his self-reproaches were painful. Then again he thought, "allowing that all is as it was between us, that she loves me in *her* way, and I her in *mine*, is that enough to constitute lasting happiness? *No, it is not.* I should loathe the insipid homage of daily duties pointedly fulfilled, and weary of a mind which had not sufficient energy to think for itself. If I saw that my wife did not enter, from a similarity of tastes, into my occupations and pursuits, I should feel no satisfaction in her doing so to oblige me; and I certainly have already observed, that Adeline's habits, and even her principles, have led her to a life of monotonous tranquillity and insipid cares."

And here again Lady Hamlet Vernon's words recurred to him with tremendous power. Would it not then, after all, be more noble to set her free from an engagement, which would fail in producing the happiness that they both had been led to expect? He mused with painful intensity as his thoughts rested on this idea; but in the exercise of analyzing, comparing, and combining these various views of his situation, his mind was imperceptibly drawn, to the single subject productive of them—his early attachment to Adeline; and he fell into a comparatively calm *étre*—that species of calm, which dwelling upon one feeling generally produces, after the mind has been tossed about in various contending conflicts. His youthful and first affections, together with all the awakening recollections of early tenderness—the developement of their mutual passion, ere yet they knew they were destined for each other—the happy prospect of bliss which had succeeded—all, all recurred to him, and revived the dying glow of attachment in his breast.—He took out her picture from his writing-desk—gazed at the well-known features, yet thought he had never before been aware of their full and perfect charm, that union of intelligence with purity which is supposed to constitute the being of an angel, that perfect candour, mingled with quick perception, which this portrait conveyed, and conveyed but feebly in comparison with the original,—set the seal to his conviction, that no one could prove to him what Adeline had been.

In replacing the portrait, he lifted up some loose papers, and it chanced that the lock of Lady Hamlet Vernon's hair,

which he had kept (and never since looked at) on the night which she had been overturned at his door, dropped from the paper. He could not but admire it; its glossy richness—its hue of gold shining through the depth of its darkness: it was certainly very beautiful, and he sighed as he laid it down. "What if, indeed, her words should be true, and how can they be *true* unless in one sense—in that of Adeline's loving another? It must, it must be so!" and this fatal conviction broke down once more all the fabric of happiness which a moment before he had erected; and in this revived phrensy of feeling he passed the night. It was broad daylight ere he could bring himself to seek repose, nor did he then till worn-out nature sunk in forgetfulness and sleep.

When he awoke the next day—for morning was far advanced—it was like one awaking from the delirium of fever. He felt exhausted, spent, as though a long illness had shaken his being—so much will a few hours of mental agitation unnerve the strongest frame. The more he tried to collect his thoughts and bring them to a final result, the less did he find himself capable of the effort; the energies of his mind seemed paralyzed: he appeared to himself to be under the influence of some spell which impelled all his actions in an opposite direction to his wishes, as in paralytic affections, the limb ever moves in a contrary motion to that which the sufferer would have it. He was perplexed, amazed, and saw no clue to guide him through the labyrinth. The object of all his wishes—she to whom all his views and plans had had reference from the moment he could feel at all—now appeared to have been almost within reach of his attainment, and yet, by some inimical power, was placed at a greater and more uncertain distance than she had ever been. Lord Albert was not a weak character: but who is not weak, while they admit passion, and not principle, to guide their conduct.

At length, after having run over the subjects of his last night's perturbed reflections, the decision to which he came was one, that feeling alone, unaided by moral and religious principle, was likely to conduct him to; and he determined to pursue a middle course, without making known his suspicions. He resolved to miss no opportunity of observation, till he should ever have his fears dispelled or confirmed concerning Mr. Foley. He argued, that to speak openly to

Hamlet's wishes were centred in an uncontrolled passion for him ; a passion which, since she had allowed it to wear its undisguised character, she found a thousand plausible reasons for admitting to control her every thought.

There was no cause, she argued, sufficiently strong in Lord d'Esterre's engagement with Lady Adeline to forbid the indulgence of her love for him ; *she* had no relative duties to sway her conduct—she was her own mistress ; and in the opinion of the world—*her* world at least—she would be justified, where envy did not bias the judgment, in endeavouring to form so desirable a connexion. However Lord Albert d'Esterre might have been ostensibly considered by the members of the exclusive circle as one of themselves, and however much they affected to deride and despise his principles and habits, yet as a man whose talents promised to shine in the senate, and whose interest was considerable, his actions were not, in fact, quite so undervalued, or so indifferent to the leading personages of that body, as they might on a cursory view appear to be. He was still, Lady Tilney thought, too young, in her political way of viewing every thing, and had not given sufficient proofs of firmness, as a party man, for any direct overtures to be made to him on that score. But in as far as regarded his admission, in the first instance, to society among her coterie, he owed that distinction to his youth, his personal appearance, and his high rank ; to his youth especially, as fitting him to become, under clever tuition, an obedient satellite ; and when his very attractive exterior and manners, which were at once dignified and original, were added to the account, it is not to be wondered that he was reckoned a person worth courting, and a character worth forming, which might be incorporated, in due time, as one of their own.

Still there was a probationary state to pass through before any one was actually admitted into the arena of that circle. Lady Hamlet Vernon, however, who from his first appearance had marked him with her peculiar approbation, was very clear-sighted as to the views which might be formed of others respecting an appropriation of him to their own purposes ; and she thought she perceived, almost from the first, in the politic and eager attentions of Lady Tilney towards him, as well as in those of her silent but not uninterested lord, some ulterior object in obtaining his favour and confidence,

which she imagined might also turn to her own account, as affording herself means to acquire an influence over him of another nature.

It is surprising with what quick perception women will discover the most hidden sentiments of others, when they have the remotest reference to the object of their favour and pre-dilection ; and many a man owes his success in life to the unceasing, and perhaps unknown endeavours to serve him, of some devoted, and it may be, unrequited heart. Who will watch like a woman over those minute details, which swell the aggregate of greater means ? Who can feel, as a woman can, those vibrations of circumstances which may enable her to seize upon favourable moments, those *molissima tempora fandi*, when the current of success may be directed to the object of her wishes. Lady Hamlet was well skilled to do all this, and from the first of Lord Albert's appearance in the circle in which she moved, her most diligent attention was ever awake to all that concerned him. She perceived that whenever he was spoken of, the Tilneys were particularly cautious and guarded in giving their opinion ; and she was not mistaken in thence arguing that they were aware he might become a man of high consequence, in every sense of the term, as well as in their own peculiar acceptance of it.

Lady Hamlet Vernon felt that in this they had not formed an erroneous view of him, for she read ambition in his character : and though the species of that quality of mind was certainly very different in Lord Albert and in herself, yet its general nature was no stranger to her, and she knew it to be too powerful a lever in human actions to overlook or disregard it in this instance. On the contrary, she determined to use it in behalf of her own views ; and from this motive she dwelt with energy on the subject of Lord Albert's prospects for the future, while conversing with him at Lady Tilney's. She then found she was touching a master-key to open the secret recesses of his mind and feelings. In its very first application she had found it more than answer her expectations ; and the consciousness that the apparent harmony of her sentiments with his on this point, had established an interest in and obtained an influence over the very mainspring of Lord Albert d'Esterre's being, inspired her with the liveliest hope.

No mercenary views, it is true, no mean love of power for little ends, actuated her, but a violent and overpowering passion, which, however, was equally subversive of rectitude of conduct, since it was neither guided by principle, nor restrained by moral or religious control. It was not directly any selfishness of motive that impelled her to the course she was pursuing, for she would have gone blindly forward in any plan the most contrary to her interests, her habits, or her feelings, which promised to draw her into a union of sentiment with the object of her passion ; but those who suffer themselves to be directed by such impulses, are under complete delusion respecting the estimate they form of themselves. Whenever passion obtains the mastery, the effect is equally certain ; the wholesome freedom of a mind at liberty is gone ; and when once enslaved, it becomes like a wave of the sea, tossed about in every direction the sport of winds, and is as liable to dash into ruin, as to use any power it may possess to beneficial purposes.

While the fever of agitation swayed Lady Hamlet Vernon, she gave herself up in secret to the inebriating delight of dwelling upon Lord Albert's looks and words, during their last interview ; she recalled the expression of his eyes, as he gazed at her while she was speaking ; she still seemed to feel the pressure of his hand thrill through her veins, as when he received the ring she gave him in pledge of friendship ; but as these intoxicating sensations subsided, she relapsed again into fear, lest she should have gone too far at first ; lest any thing she had said or looked might have appeared too violent, too plainly have told the tale of her feelings, ere time had ripened the moment when their disclosure might be more in unison with his wishes. Then again she hoped that her agitation might have been attributed alone to the caution which she had ventured to give him respecting Lady Adeline ; and that she gave him such caution, she trusted would have been ascribed to a friendly feeling for his happiness. "Yes, his happiness!" she repeated to herself ; "for I could sacrifice my own to secure that boon for him. It is not from motives of jealousy that I did so warn him, for I could bear to see him the husband of another, providing that other were really worthy of him, one who would share in his views, his plans, his feelings ; but to unite himself with a woman wholly unfit for him—a girl, a weak

insipid girl, made up of puritanical observances and prejudices—no, I could not see him set the seal to his future misery by allowing him to remain in ignorance of a fact which is known to all the world except himself."

In this sophistical manner did Lady Hamlet Vernon argue herself into the belief that no selfish motive impelled her, but that she was acting a noble part, and as the end designed was good, the means she thought were so likewise. In flattering this belief, she recalled every look and gesture of Lord Albert d'Esterre, and she thought she had perceived that he entertained a feeling of jealousy towards Mr. Foley. "Perhaps," she said, musing on that point, to which she had not before given her full attention, "perhaps his jealousy is not without foundation. Why is Mr. Foley so much at Dunmelraise? The circumstance of Lady Dunmelraise's protection of him through life, is not sufficient cause. After all, why should he not marry Lady Adeline, if she likes him? It would be a union much more consonant with Mr. Foley's happiness (inasmuch as he would not care what were her ways of thinking) than it would be for the noble-minded, aspiring d'Esterre."

In this new point of view Lady Hamlet Vernon found another specious argument in favour of her own conduct, and her secret wishes; and if indeed this latter assumption of a fact were true, she would be doing a doubly generous action, in forwarding the wishes of her friend Mr. Foley, while she at the same time saved Lord d'Esterre from a step that would inevitably render him unhappy.

Such were the false reasonings with which Lady Hamlet Vernon justified her feelings and her conduct to herself, and under their sway, she awaited with the utmost anxiety and impatience for Lord d'Esterre on the following morning.—But it was late before he came, and he was abstracted and silent when he did arrive; unlike the animated being whom she had witnessed speaking to her with such force and expression of lively feeling on the previous evening. The fact is, Lord Albert d'Esterre had been at Lady Dunmelraise's, where he had found Adeline alone; and as, in her converse and presence, there was a soothing calm, a persuasive assurance, even in her silence, of her perfect purity and truth, those feelings of jealous doubt and mistrust that had preyed upon him before his visit to her, had gradually sub-

Lady Adeline Seymour, was like being in the sunshine of spring. There was an habitual serenity about her, which seemed to animate all around her ; every thing and every sentiment of Adeline's was in its right place—no one took undue precedence of the other ; the harmony of her form and features was a true reflection of her happily disposed nature ; but that nature owed its very essence and continuance to the great ruling feeling of her mind. Every thought, and every action, were immediately or remotely under the guidance of pious belief : the nature of her happiness could not be uprooted by any earthly power : she might suffer *anguish here* ; but she had a secret and secure joy that those only know who, like her, fix the anchor of their trust on an hereafter.

Having spent the greater part of the morning in such society, Lord Albert tacitly acknowledged its superiority to that in which he had lately lived, and the invitation he received to dine in South Audley Street was eagerly accepted. The party which he found assembled at Lady Dunmelraise's consisted chiefly of her family,—Lord and Lady Delamere, their two sons and daughter, and a few other persons who came in the evening. Lord Delamere was a shy man, and his shyness had sometimes the effect of pride ; but the estimable points in his character were of such sterling value, that his friends loved him with a zeal of attachment which spoke volumes in his praise ; and he was looked up to by his family not only as their father, but their companion : nothing could be more beautiful than the union which subsisted between them ; nothing more truly worthy of imitation than the virtuous dignity with which they filled their high station.

Lady Delamere still possessed great beauty ; and the charm that never dies, the charm of fascination of manner and of air, defied the inroads which time makes on mere personal beauty. She was one of those very few women, who unite to feminine gentleness the qualities ascribed to a masculine mind. At the time she married, her husband's affairs were so much involved, that nothing but the utmost self-denial could possibly relieve them : and she entered into his plans of retrenchment with an alacrity and vigour, which proved her to be a wife indeed ; not the plaything of an hour, to deck the board, or gratify the vanity of the possessor, but a companion, a friend, a helpmate, one who in retirement possessed resources that could enliven and cheer

the solitary hour : who knew she was loved, and felt she deserved to be so, with that security of honest pride, which the consciousness of desert never fails to impart in married life, and yet whose refinement and delicacy of feeling never lost the elegancies of polished manners, because there were no novel objects to excite a sickly appetite for admiration.

To please is certainly the peculiar attribute and business of woman, in every relation of life ; and those who neglect to foster and keep alive this power, reject one of the greatest means which Providence has placed in their hands to effect mighty operations of good. But there is a false and spurious kind of pleasing which must not be confounded with the true. Every woman will know how to distinguish these in her own conscience. When the wish to please is a mere gratification of vanity, when it lives always beyond the circle of her own hearth, and dies as soon as it is called upon for exercise within domestic walls ; then, indeed, it may be known for what it is : but when, as in Lady Delamere's case, this virtue shone most splendidly confined to the sphere of home, its price was above rubies ; in short it might truly be said of her, "the heart of her husband doth safely trust in her."

At the time when Lord Delamere was in the greatest difficulties, he did not as too many do, fly to a foreign country, to continue the life of self-indulgence which he could no longer maintain in his own ; he did not make it an excuse for forsaking his patrimony, and the seat of his ancestors, that he could not live there in that splendour which he had formerly done ; but with a spirit of true pride he said : "the land of my forefathers with bread and water, rather than banishment and luxuries." He made no secret of his poverty ; and it was a means of clothing him with honour : for with patience in his solitude he found content, and with content all things. His self-denial enabled him to be generous to others : and the very act of living on his estates, gave bread to hundreds. Lady Delamere went hand in hand with him in all his plans ; and they pursued, for some years, with untiring step, the path of duty which they had marked out.

Meanwhile, their family grew up around them, and every thing prospered—for a blessing went along with them : they were adored by their dependants ; honoured even by those

who hated them for their superiority ; and with the occasional visit of a relative or friend their time flowed on, fruitful in its course, and fraught with real and substantial happiness.

But in this their retirement they were not forgotten. It is not those who are fluttering about their empty showy existence in the sunshine of pleasure and splendour whose memories live longest, even in that very world they so busily court. All great and useful works are the fruit of retirement ; all strength of character is formed, not in indulgence and prosperity, but in retreat, and under the grave hand of that schoolmaster, Adversity. The corn is not ripened till it receives the first and the latter rain : neither is the moral character formed to its great end, till it has known the storms of adversity. The Delameres had now reaped the fruits of this earthly probation, and they shone forth with lustre, which could not be eclipsed by any tinsel splendour of mere outward grandeur. The children of such parents could not be supposed to be altogether different from themselves, for though there are anomalies in nature, it rarely happens that the offspring are not like either father or mother, still less that they are not ultimately influenced by the example of parents.

When Lord Albert d'Esterre found himself in this happy society, so different, and yet, as he acknowledged to himself in every passing moment, so superior to that in which he had lately lived, he felt as if he also were of another race of beings ; a pleased sort of self-satisfaction took possession of him : so much are we affected by outward things, so much does the mind reflect the hues by which it is surrounded. Are these, he thought, the persons whose names I have been accustomed to hear coupled with ridicule or condemnation—are these the persons who are designated vulgar ? Strange indeed is the misnomer ! And that there were many in the same grade, whose characters shed lustre upon their high stations, many who constituted the true character of British nobles, was a truth that Lord Albert had not sufficiently considered ; for where is there a body in any country more worthy of respect and admiration than the real nobility of our land ? It is only to be lamented that the errors of the few, and the assumed superiority of the *ton*, should have given ground for a false estimate of

those characters of solid worth, whose virtues and whose ancient ancestry reflect a mutual value on each other ; and the moral tranquillity of whose lives is at once a dignified refutation of the depreciation of high birth, and the best confirmation of its real consequence. But the middling classes, those who envy their superiors, or those who would attain to a distinction in society to which they have no immediate claim, are too apt in these days to form a mistaken judgment, founded upon newspaper reports or the spurious publications of the day, in which much false representation is mingled with some gross truths, and the delinquency of the few ascribed to the conduct of the many. Nor is it these alone, who are thus led into an erroneous opinion. The Public press produces a circulation of good and evil, of truth or falsehood, universally ; and wherever the latter creeps in, there ought to be an antidote administered. It should not be suffered to smoulder and gain force till it produce some serious mischief.

It should be told that the few individuals, whose idle and trifling lives, and whose tenour of conduct, lay them open to contumely and blame, do *not* constitute the great mass of English nobility. So far from it, they are persons whose lives differ as much from the general existence of their compeers, as does the life of one individual in any class from that of another. Vice is not confined to nobility because a few great names have sullied its brightness. It is a false conclusion to consider *them* as examples of their caste, any more than the man in inferior station, whose delinquency is proved, and who suffers the penalty of the law, is to be taken as a specimen of the people at large.

In the course of conversation at Lady Dunmelraise's dinner, the ensuing drawing-room was spoken of. "I am one of those old-fashioned persons," said Lady Delamere, "who feel a real pleasure in the thought of going to court—for first, I shall have the gratification of seeing my Sovereign, and of presenting to him another branch of that parent stock, who are personally as well as on principle attached to him and to his house. And though, doubtless, there are many who share in these feelings, yet I will yield the palm of loyalty and zeal to none ; and, in the second place, I do very firmly believe that, in as far as society goes, a drawing-room does much moral good. There are certain lines

drawn, which are useful to remind persons in general, that vice is contemned, and virtue honoured ; and there is a distinction, too, of time, and place, and situation, which is not yet laid aside ; I heartily wish there were many more drawing-rooms than there are."

Lord Delamere fully agreed with his wife in this opinion —the young people did not giggle and whisper, " what a bore it will be," but coincided with their parents. Lady Mary Delamere too declared, that she thought there was no occasion better suited to show off real beauty to advantage than the splendour of a mid-day assembly, where every thing conspired to give people an air of decorative style which they could not possess at any other public meeting. " What pleasure," she continued, " I shall have in going with my cousin Adeline, and gathering up all the stray words of admiration, which I am sure will abundantly fall in her praise. Do tell me, love," addressing herself to her in a half whisper, while the rest of the persons at table conversed on other matters, " do tell me of what colour is your dress, and how it is to be trimmed ?"

" Really," replied Lady Adeline, colouring as though she had committed a crime, " I have not thought about it. All I begged of mamma was, that it might be very simple and, I believe, of a rose-colour—for a rose is my favourite flower."

" Dear child," said the good-natured Lady Mary, " you must think about it now, for the day is drawing near, and I shall be so disappointed if you are not well dressed."

" You are very kind, sweet cousin, but if you only knew how very little I care about the matter ;" and she laughed heartily at the idea of its being a subject of the least importance.

" But, Lord Albert d'Esterre," said Lady Mary, appealing to him as he sat on the other side of Lady Adeline, " you will interfere, will you not ? You will not be pleased, I am sure, lovely as Adeline is, to see her a *figure* at a drawing-room."

" What sort of figure do you mean ?" he asked, smiling.

" Oh, dear ! you know well enough what I mean--unbecomingly attired."

" I think," he replied, " that although some figures will always be admired, still there is no merit in disdaining the usages of society or the advantages of dress, and that the

neglect of appearance may in a young person be produced by some causes which are not desirable." He looked fixedly at Adeline as he spoke, and she blushed very deeply ; but answered with an unhesitating voice :

" I shall be always desirous of pleasing those I love, even in trifles ; but I should be sorry that trifles occupied their thoughts."

Lord Albert was silent ; he felt a kind of chill come over him, for the remembrance of Lady Hamlet Vernon's instructions recurred to him ; and he thought he saw a species of puritanical pride in the general tenour of Lady Adeline's manner of thinking and speaking, which seemed to justify the observations she had made upon her character. Then again he feared, that in other points he might discover more reason still to be dissatisfied—points on which his vital happiness rested. He looked instinctively round the room ; but the person who at that moment crossed his thoughts was not present, and he again wrapped himself up in that mood of suspicion, which is ever on the alert to seek out the object which would give it most pain ; under this influence he returned to the subject of Adeline's presentation dress, and said, addressing Lady Dunmelraise :

" I am not particularly an advocate for splendid attire ; but I am sure, Lady Dunmelraise, you will agree with me in thinking, that there is an affectation in going unadorned to a court, which is a sort of disrespect to the place."

" Indeed," said Lady Adeline, in her wild eager way, " I will not go to much expenditure on my dress, for I have a plan for doing some good going on, which will require all the money I can collect, and I should be very sorry to see mamma wasting her's on any thing which I so little prize as my court-dress."

Lady Dunmelraise only smiled, and replied, " We must all subscribe to Adeline's toilette, for she is the veriest miser on that score herself. However, Lord Albert, do not be uneasy, I think she will not disgrace us," and the pleased mother passed on to other discourse.

This tenacity of Lady Adeline appeared to be a confirmation of his suspicions ; and when, in the after part of the evening, Mr. Foley was announced, Lord Albert lost all command over himself, and under plea of a bad headache, sat silent, that he might the better watch every look and

motion of Lady Adeline and Mr. Foley. Turning every indifferent word and gesture into the meaning with which his jealousy clothed it, he fancied that they were certainly mutually attached. Whatever soothing attentions Lady Adeline showed to himself, he imagined were put on for the purpose of deceiving him ; and his manner was so cold and haughty, that she in her turn began to shrink within herself, and to wear an abstracted, and somewhat distressed countenance.

Under this impression, Mr. Foley, with his *doucereux* air, whispered Lady Adeline, "that he was sure she was ill," and asked her "to cast out the evil spirit by her sweet power of music."

"Do, my love," said Lady Dunmelraise, "sing that delightful duet, which is always charming, '*O Momento fortunato!*' and then I feel sure we shall be all love and harmony—shall we not, Lord d'Esterre ?"

The chords of the piano-forte relieved him from the embarrassment of a reply, and he listened to the impassioned tones of *poi Doman, poi Doman l'altro*, ascribing to every intonation and every sentiment of her feeling voice the dictates of a passion for his supposed rival.

"That used to be a favourite of your's, Albert," said Lady Adeline when the duet was finished ; "but I am afraid your headache prevents you from enjoying any thing to-night."

"I do not feel well," he replied shortly ; "and lest my indisposition should in any way affect the pleasure of others, I will hasten away."

"Oh yes, you appear ill, indeed !" said Lady Adeline, fixing her eyes tenderly on his ; "and, dear Albert, perhaps you had better go—the noise of company may be too much for you :" and she held out her hand to him—"Oh, if you are unwell, by all means go home," she repeated, with an anxiety of tender interest, that no one else could misinterpret to be any thing but genuine affection, but which to him seemed to spring from the desire of his absence.

"You shall be obeyed," he said, returning her look reproachfully ; and at the same time reaching his hat, which happened to lie on a table beyond Mr. Foley, he almost rudely snatched it away, and with a celerity of movement that admitted of no courtesy to any one present, departed.

Lady Dunmelraise called after him, "Lord Albert, do you dine here to-morrow?" But he heard not, or affected not to hear, and with the gnawing rage of blind jealousy darted into his carriage, and gave the order, "home."

Soon after the rest of the party broke up; and when Lady Dunmelraise and her daughter found themselves once more alone, their mutual silence proved that they both felt the strangeness of Lord Albert's manner of departure. But although the words were on Lady Dunmelraise's tongue to utter—"he is *capricious*,"—she restrained, and suffered them to die away in silence, determined that her daughter's own unbiased judgment should form for herself that opinion of Lord Albert's character, which would soon now ultimately decide on her acceptance or rejection of him as her husband.

CHAPTER III.

OFFICIAL LIFE.

It may be recollected, that when Lady Glenmore returned from the water-party, she was cruelly disappointed at finding only a note from her husband. "How little," she thought, as she sat at her toilette taking off the dress which in the morning she had not despised, as having been approved of and admired by him, but which now she cast aside with disdain—"how little men know how to value the affections of a wife! I have been for many hours in what is called a gay scene, and during the whole of the time, I cannot recall one moment when Glenmore was not present to my fancy; but he, I dare say, on the contrary, has not given a wish or a sigh to me." She looked in the glass as she thought this, and although a tear dimmed her eye, vanity whispered, "ought this to be so?"

"I am at least *pretty*; young, no one can deny; yet I am neglected for a number of old stupid men, a dull political discussion. Oh, those vile politics! how I hate them. And when he comes home, he will look so grave, so pre-occupied! Oh, I wish there was no such thing in the world

as a House of Lords or Commons. Is life itself long enough for love?—and must dull, dry business, consume the hours of youth, pale his cheek, perhaps blanch his hair, his beautiful hair, for they say care has whitened the locks even in one night! how very terrible this is.”—And she arose, and walked to and fro in her room, and listened to every carriage that rolled by—then she took up *Lalla Rookh*—read some of the most impassioned passages, and wished herself a Peri. “I have but one wish,” she said, “that wish is to be loved as I love.”—Poor Lady Glenmore! this beautiful phantom of a young heart is, nevertheless, in the sense in which she framed it, a mere deceit. Love such as her’s does not grow by feeding on; there is a strength of character, a consciousness of self-dignity, the duties of a rational being, above all, the duties of a Christian, which must be cherished and understood, before any lasting fabric of happiness can be built on love. This was never more proved than in the restless impatience, the miserable (for such hours to such minds are miserable) anxiety and disappointment, which converted minutes into hours, and hours into ages, before Lord Glenmore returned. As she toresaw, when he did come, though he pressed her with almost rapturous tenderness to his heart, and inquired with trusting fondness of her party, hoping she had been well amused, he was himself so exhausted and harassed by business, that he professed himself unable to talk. “Why did you sit up for me, dearest?” he asked; “you will fatigue yourself uselessly; and I must really insist in future that you do not do so. At least, if you had been *amusing yourself*, I should not be sorry; but as it is, really Georgina, love, you must be better behaved in future—but why did you not go to the supper?”

“I came home to see you,” she answered, in a tremulous voice. Lord Glenmore chided her lovingly, and assured her that he had not less anxiously desired to return to her; but he said, smiling,

“You know you have the advantage over our sex, for *your business* is love—but our *business* is a matter apart from that gentler care. I long to tell you, my sweet Georgina, all that has interested me this day, and I think you will share in my satisfaction; but I am really unequal to enter into the details at present: to-morrow, love, you shall know

all." Lady Glenmore only sighed; but with the sweet docility of her nature, never questioned his will, and his being with her, constituted in fact all she cared to know. The truth was, that certain changes in the ministry had long been talked of, and on that morning overtures had been made to Lord Glenmore to take on himself an important office. The whole of the morning had been occupied in settling preliminaries, and ascertaining the sentiments of those public men with whom he was to act: for Lord Glenmore was a conscientious man, and would not mount a ladder, which he intended afterward to cast down. It was not place he sought, but power for purposes alike good and great. He felt within himself a capacity for the honours and distinctions he aspired to, and knew on principle the responsibility which attends success in such measures.

One of the first persons, whom he considered to be a man of inflexible integrity, and whom he wished for as a colleague in office, was Lord Albert d'Esterre; and since the situation which he had himself received, threw several appointments into his own hands, Lord Glenmore lost no time in writing him the following note:

"**MY DEAR D'ESTERRE:**—I think that I shall not be making a proposal unacceptable to your wishes, or in discrepancy with your future plans, when I announce to you that I have accepted the office of _____. The official appointments immediately connected with it of course become mine, and it would afford me the greatest satisfaction in my arduous undertaking, to have one possessed of your talents to aid me in the performance of its duties. Would you accept the office of under Secretary of State in my department? I need not express my ardent hope that you will consent. You know that our views of public matters coincide thoroughly—let me therefore hear from or see you as soon as possible.

"Your's ever most truly,
"GLENMORE."

After despatching this note, Lord Glenmore sought his wife, and entered into an account of what passed the previous day; he spoke of the increased expediency that would ensue of her living very much in society, whether he could himself be present with her or not; and added, that she must

not allow any fears or mistrust, either of herself or him, to lessen the pleasure which it was natural, at her age and with her charm of person, she should derive from the homage around her.

"It is not mistrust, dearest Glenmore, that makes me feel joyless in your absence, for what can I fear?—it is true that I am uninterested in every thing, when you are not by to share my pleasure; but indeed you quite mistake me, love, if you suppose that I am not all confidence in you. And as to myself, what is there that can be for a moment dangerous to my peace, when all my interest, all my wishes, are centred in your love?"

"My own best Georgina," he replied, pressing her to his breast, "be ever thus, and what can I wish for more. But, love, mark me—you are now no longer the girl, whose duties were centred in passive obedience to her relatives, and whose recreations were the innocent, but trifling pursuits of girlhood; you are the wife of a man who is become a servant of the public—whose high cares must necessarily debar him frequently from the enjoyment of those domestic pleasures which a less busy or responsible life might allow. It is now become your duty, love, to feel your own consequence in his—to play *your* part in the scale by which his actions must be measured, and to be aware that many will court you from an idea of your being wife to a minister, who would not for your own sake alone, perhaps, have thought of you; while others who previously courted you for the presence and the beauty of your outward show, will now doubly affect your society, and endeavour, it may be, to use your influence to undue purposes. All are not pure and single-hearted like you, my dearest, and these cautions, believe me, are not given as to one whose worth I doubt, but, on the contrary, to one whose very ingenuousness and worth may prove a snare to her. In all that concerns mere knowledge of the world I recommend you to look to Lady Tendern and Lady Tilney; they have passed creditably through the busy throng, and are certainly in all respects fashionable, and bear a high consideration in the estimation of the London world. You cannot do better, then, than to shape your course by their's in respect to what the French call *conduite*; as to the dictates of the heart, and moral duties, I refer you to your own and your excellent mother's."

Lady Glenmore scarcely knew why, but her heart swelled almost to bursting while her husband spoke thus to her ; and it was with difficulty that she restrained the tears which seemed at every moment ready to overflow. The truth was she dwelt upon his first words, his declaration, that his newly acquired honour would debar him from the pleasures of home society ; and she looked up timidly as with tender accents she asked, "whether she was doomed now to be always absent from him."

"I trust not, dearest ; at all events, you know my best and fondest interests are centred in you, and you would, I am sure, consider your husband's advantage and glory to be of value to you, even though these were obtained by the sacrifice of his company."

She said "yes," but *felt* decidedly, that had she spoken the truth, the "yes" would have been "no."

Lord Glenmore received several notes, and with a pre-occupied air which prevented his observing the melancholy depicted on his wife's countenance, he snatched a hasty embrace, and was hurrying away, when looking back he said, "Remember, love, not a word of this to any one, even to your mother. A few days will release the restraint I put upon your tongue," he added, smiling ; "but in you I expect to find the *wonder*, that a woman can keep a secret ;—in all things, I believe in, and trust you. Adieu, love, adieu." And he was gone.

That which would have pleased a vain woman, and gratified an ambitious one, fell only like lead on the young Georgina's heart.

"So," she said, sinking down in a chair, "I am a minister's wife. And am I the happier? Far, far from it ; I am seldom now to see my husband, and when I do, the concerns of the public are to form our consideration and discourse ; whereas, hitherto, in the short sunshine of our marriage, ourselves, our mutual hopes, our own dear home, have constituted all our care ; and I fondly trusted, perhaps foolishly hoped, would have continued to do so. What a desolating change! But he says I must prepare for it ; and since it is his will that thus it should be, I will endeavour to hide the mournful feelings of my heart. My dear mamma shall not see that I have wept either, for she will, perhaps, ascribe my tears to my husband's temper, and that would be worse

still." So saying, she roused herself from the despondency into which she had fallen, bathed her face, called up smiles which were *not genuine* for the first time in her life ; and, having re-arranged her dress, she said to herself as she cast a glance at her mirror, " Am I not now metamorphosed into the wife of a minister ?" Just as she was preparing to ring her bell for her carriage, Lady Tenderden arrived.

" How well you are looking, *la belle aux yeux bleus*," said Lady Tenderden, kissing her : " there certainly never was any body who had the azure of the skies so exactly reflected in her eyes." This might be true ; but it certainly was not true that she was looking well. To a vague answer given by Lady Glenmore she made no allusion ; but looking at her very fixedly, so fixedly that it made her colour deeply, Lady Tenderden said, " Yet methinks something more than usual has occurred—is the report true ?"

" What report ?"

" Nay, now, do not make the *discreet*, for by to-morrow it will be in the newspapers. Come, tell me, your friend, am I not to wish you joy ?"

" Of what, I may ask you in return, Lady Tenderden, for I can sincerely answer, that no increased cause of joy has befallen me, that I know of." This was said so naturally, that her interrogator was posed. Judging by herself, Lady Tenderden conceived it impossible that the report of Lord Glenmore's having accepted a high office in government, which would have been the envy of so many, should be true ; or else she thought the little lady must be more silly than she ever believed her to be. She went on, nevertheless, to sound Lady Glenmore in various ways, expecting to make out something relative to the subject ; but Lady Glenmore's calm indifference totally foiled her, as she herself afterwards confessed ; and she set it down in her own mind that for the present she could not be of any particular service to her, or derive any more reflected lustre from her, as being the friend of a woman whose husband was in power.

How the simplicity of a genuine character confounds the pertinacity of a keen worldly mind ! Lady Tenderden was completely at fault : when another visiter, who came much on the same errand, afforded an additional proof of the truth of this observation. Lady Tilney came up to Lady Glenmore, and after the first salutation, entered with all her

energy and eloquence upon politics ; inveighing against government measures, and hoping that now a man of more liberal principles had come in, some change of *measures* at least would be adopted. Lady Glenmore sat abstracted, and began arranging her embroidery frame ; seeing that there was no chance of Lady Tilney's speech coming to a conclusion :

“ Well, my dear, and now,” the latter said, “ you will really have a part to play : how I envy you ! What interest—what endless business will devolve on you ! Were I you, I would propose to Lord Glenmore to write all his private letters for him ; by this means you know you would be *au fait* of all the state secrets, and could, in a great measure, guide things your own way. You write rapidly, I believe ; and your hand is not bad ; it wants a little more character perhaps : but you know there is the man who advertises to teach any hand-writing. I do assure you he is excellent—I tried him myself, and a very few lessons from him would teach you to give your writing the firm diplomatic air—and you would quickly learn that significant style which means nothing ; and by which, should any thing occur to make you change your mind (Lord Glenmore's I mean), you could twist the phrase into another meaning, suitable to the occasion. I am sure I am always for decision and truth ; but in certain cases prudence and caution are necessary ; and therefore these resources are requisite to be observed in diplomatic writing. If you look back, you will always see it has been so in all ministers' letters.”

Lady Glenmore, who had sat silent hitherto, now conceived herself obliged to speak, and replied, “ that she knew nothing of diplomacy, except the name ; that every thing of the kind always made her yawn, and she hoped she should never have to copy any letters of business for any body.” Lady Tilney in her turn stared, and observing that Lady Glenmore was very young, she said : “ Well, but at all events, you will be delighted to see your name perpetually with all the people in power ; and to hear them say, that is the minister's beautiful wife ! and the honours of your husband, at least to any one so domestically inclined, must be a great delight.”

“ I do not want Lord Glenmore to have any more honours than he has, for my own sake ; but whatever pleases him will certainly please me.”

"Oh, oh! so then you do confess it? and he is minister for —?"

"I am happy to hear it, if it really is to confer all the honour you seem to think upon him. But I wish you would tell me what *you* mean, Lady Tilney, for I do not quite understand you." There was a sort of real *not caring* about Lady Glenmore, which deceived Lady Tilney, as it had done Lady Tenderden. It was a thing so totally out of Lady Tilney's calculation that any one should not be enchanted at such a situation, that she was persuaded either that the fact was not so, or that Lady Glenmore did not know that it was the case.

Just as this inquisition had ceased, a servant entered with a few lines written in pencil on a card, which he gave to Lady Tenderden: they were from Mr. Leslie Winyard, to say, that having seen her carriage at the door, and having something very particular to communicate to her, he requested ten minutes' conversation, if he might be allowed to come up. Lady Tenderden remembered Lady Glenmore's former scruples about receiving him, but determined to overcome them.

"*Chère ladi.*" she said, "you must positively, notwithstanding the fear of Lord Glenmore, allow me to see Mr. Leslie Winyard; I will take all the *imminent* risk of the danger upon myself; and besides, you know, visiting *me* is not visiting *you*." Lady Glenmore looked exceedingly distressed, and said, "If you want to speak to Mr. Leslie Winyard, why can you not speak to him in your carriage?"

"Oh! that is so uncomfortable. Besides, Lady Tilney, I appeal to you, was there ever any thing so strange as Lady Glenmore's refusing to let Mr. Lesley Winyard come up stairs to *she me*, merely because *le tiran de mari* does not approve of morning visits from gentlemen?"

"Pho, pho," said Lady Tilney, "he was only joking, and that dear little good Georgina thought he was serious." Then turning to the servant who was waiting for orders, "Show Mr. Leslie Winyard up stairs directly," commanding, as she always did, or tried to do, in every place and every person. In a few minutes Mr. Leslie Winyard made his appearance; and having paid his compliments to Lady Glenmore and Lady Tilney for some little time, he then stepped aside with Lady Tenderden, and after conversing together, apparently engaged on a most interesting subject,

they returned to the other ladies, and he entered into general conversation with his usual light and amusing anecdote. At length, however, Lady Tilney arose, saying to Mr. Winyard, "well, notwithstanding your *agrémens*, I must go, for I have a hundred things to do." Lady Tenderden echoed this declaration, and they both went away, leaving Mr. Leslie Winyard, who seemed determined to sit them out *en tête-à-tête* with Lady Glenmore.

The consciousness that any thing has been said on any subject, always creates in an unartificial mind an awkwardness when the predicament that has led to the discussion really occurs ;—and Lady Glenmore experienced this painfully. Every instant the sensation became stronger, and, of course, was not lost to the observation of her companion, though he affected not to perceive it ; and by dint of feigning ignorance, and talking on different subjects, he arrived at bringing her into the calm and comfortable frame of mind he had in view, one in which she would feel *le diable n'est pas si noir* ; and this he effected with his usual address, till he evidently saw that she was rather diverted than otherwise by his conversation.

He then led the discourse to music, and entreated her once more to sing the *Sempre più t'amo* of Caraffa. She readily agreed, and their voices were in beautiful and thrilling unison when the door opened, and in came Lord Glenmore. His wife suddenly stopped, and rising from the instrument, looked abashed. Lord Glenmore, with the manners of a man of the world, addressed Mr. Leslie Winyard, regretted that he had interrupted the music, declare^d that he had some letters to write, and prayed him to finish the duet. But Lady Glenmore tried in vain to recommence singing—her voice faltered, her hand trembled, as she touched the keys—her eyes wandered to her husband with an expression of inquiry and uneasiness ; and Mr. Leslie, too much the man of the world, and too much skilled in his *metier* to push matters at an unfavourable moment, declared that he was exceedingly sorry, but found himself under the necessity of going away, having an appointment on business which he could not put off. Apologizing, therefore, to Lord Glenmore, to whom he always took care to pay particular deference, for not being able to remain, he hurried out.

Lady Glenmore hastened with considerable trepidation of

manner to explain to her husband how it had chanced that he found her singing with Mr. Leslie Winyard: but Lord Glenmore seemed more deeply engaged in thinking of the letter he was perusing than of what she was saying, and only looked up smilingly in her face, and said, "My dear love, why are you so agitated about such a trifle?"—"Is it a trifle?" she said: "well, then, I need not care, and am quite happy again." She kissed his forehead; and further discourse was prevented by a servant's entering, to inform Lord Glenmore that Lord d'Esterre requested to see him if he was disengaged. Lord Glenmore immediately desired that he might be shown into his private apartment; and at the same time gave orders that no one else might be admitted except the persons whose names are on the list; then pressing his wife's hand tenderly, but evidently much preoccupied in mind, he left the room.

"Is it possible," thought Lady Glenmore, looking after him—"can this be *my* husband, who so lately appeared to have no thought save what we mutually shared? and now we seem suddenly cast asunder: different interests, different hours, different societies, all seem to place us, as if by magic, apart, and to divide us from each other. He too, who dwelt so particularly on my not receiving morning visits from young men, now seems to think it is become a matter of indifference, or rather not to think about it all. Has power then changed him so quickly? What a horrible thing power is!—how it transforms every thing into its own heartless self! Surely, surely, it is the most miserable thing in the world to be a minister's wife!" To dissipate the melancholy she felt, she ordered her carriage, and proceeded to visit her mother, who she found was ill, having caught cold in coming out of the Opera.

"Why did you not inform me of your indisposition before, dearest mamma?—I would have been here early."

"I know, love, that you would not have been remiss in any kindness; but when a woman is married, her first duty is to her husband; and I fancy," she added, smiling, and implying by her manner that she knew more than she would exactly say; "I fancy Lord Glenmore will occupy more of your time than ever, dear Georgina, if what is reported be true."

"I am sure he will never prevent my coming to you, under

any circumstances ; but really he has so much business, that I see less and less of him every day."

"Indeed!" said Lady Melcomb, looking rather blank. Fortunately for both parties, Lord Melcomb came in from his morning walk, with a countenance even more bright and cheerful than was his wont. "So, my love," he cried, "I fear you must now be no longer my little Georgy, if the current news be true, I must look at you in a new light—he?" and he examined her countenance.

"I am very sorry to hear that, dearest papa ; I was so happy in the old one, that nothing can make me wish to change in your eyes."

"Come, come, love, tell us now, has Lord Glenmore accepted the appointment of — or not?"

"Whenever he tells me to say that he has done so, I shall certainly, my dearest papa and mamma, make you the first to be acquainted with the event."

"Well, Georgina, I see how it is : you need not say more, for you are already quite diplomatic in your mode of answering. But you are right, my child : whatever confidence your husband reposes in you, you ought to regard it as sacred ;" and Lord Melcomb changed the subject like a good and a sensible man, who wishes really that his child should prove a good and faithful wife. "You have given the best earnest any girl can give," he said, "my sweet Georgina, of being an invaluable treasure to your husband, by having first been such to your parents ; and the obedience you paid us should now be implicitly transferred to Lord Glenmore. The woman who has not learned obedience, is likely to be very unhappy : for it is surely one of the first duties in every sphere of a woman's life. You know the lines, that I have so often repeated to you, and I am sure you practise them, my own Georgina, as forming the great golden rule to be observed by a married woman : one who

'Never answers till her husband cools ;
And if she rules him, never shows she rules.'

But when I say obedience, I do not mean that slavish obedience, which in matters of conscience must remain a question for conscience to decide ; I mean that system of

gentle acquiescence in all the minor motives of life, which can alone render the domestic circle a circle of harmony."

Lady Glenmore assured her father she had not forgotten, and never should forget, his excellent lessons ; and that every thing which he had recommended her to do, she invariably called to mind every night and morning. Lord Melcomb had, during a very busy life, acquitted himself under all circumstances with credit both abroad and at home, and if he had leaned to the despotic side of governing in his own house, he had done it with so much gentleness as well as firmness, that no one felt inclined to consider the yoke heavy. His daughter had never even felt it could be so, for she was by nature and inclination a docile, gentle being, leaning upon those she loved with implicit confidence for guidance and support. It was at this particular moment more than usually sweet to her to be in the society of her parents, and she promised that if Lord Glenmore were engaged in the evening, she would bring her work, and instead of passing the then dull hours at home, find a sweet solace with them ; they were a happy family, united in the bond of the strictest union, and even at a temporary parting felt pain, in proportion as being together gave them pleasure ; but it was time for Lady Glenmore, she said, to go home, and they separated.

The interview between Lord Glenmore and Lord d'Esterre that morning had passed to their mutual satisfaction ; their general opinion of public affairs, and their views of domestic happiness were too similar for them not to draw together ; and yet there were points of difference in their character, which tended to keep alive an awakening interest, and render the one more necessary to the other ; but in regard to the great question then agitating the public mind, Lady Tilney was quite mistaken in her ideas of his principles, which were at variance in many respects with what she called *liberalism*.

The fact was, the minister of the day, having discovered that those whom he had allowed to continue in office, on agreed and well-defined principles as to the line they were to pursue in their political conduct, were acting out of the pale of their engagements, and forfeiting the pledges given to himself ; consequently, with that decision of character, and straightforwardness of conduct, which formed the leading feature of

his life he availed himself of the first favourable opportunity of breaking off a connexion with men, whose moral complexions were so very unlike his own. Well knowing how vast were his resources, he sought among the rising nobility of England, who, take them altogether, form perhaps, a body more talented, and more patriotic than any other nation in the world for that support and coadjutancy which the emergency of the times demanded, in order to maintain the constitutional rights of the nation. Lord Glenmore was one of these ; and among the parties whom he, in his turn, named as being those he wished should co-operate with him in his individual department, Lord d'Esterre stood pre-eminent. This happy nomination met at once with the entire approbation of the minister, whose discernment was as penetrating, as it was prompt and decisive.

Lord Albert, it may be, in his acceptance of office, was not influenced alone by political views. He felt that, in the uncertain and agitated state of his mind, some great and commanding power for exertion was necessary to him ; some influential weight of sufficient magnitude to poise the fluctuations of a mind, whose energies he was conscious were wasting themselves in a diseased state of excitement. He thought that by engaging in a political career, where the duties imposed were of an imperious and absorbing nature, he should best find that refuge against himself which he deemed it wise to seek. Men in such cases have most indubitably great advantages over women ; many a noble career lies open to them. When they are oppressed by any woe of a private nature, they may in the exercise of their powers find arms against a sea of troubles ; but women have only one great lesson to learn, greater still perhaps if duly entertained—to suffer resignedly.

Lord Glenmore and Lord Albert prolonged their discussion to a late hour—so late that Lord Glenmore pressed him to remain and dine. "We have no company to-day," he said, "and Lady Glenmore will excuse your toilette." The invitation was too acceptable to be refused, and they passed into the drawing-room, where they found Lady Glenmore all smiles and beauty ; for the idea of enjoying her husband's company had again restored her to her wonted placid happiness.

The conversation took that happy course which it ever does

when similarity of tastes directs the subjects ; and as the minds of these young men were not only of a superior cast, but their manners too formed on that refined model which, when it is accompanied by intellectual power, gives grace to force, their social intercourse was truly such as one likes to think is the sample of a high-born, high-bred British nobleman.

Lady Glenmore listened with no insipid mawkish indifference, even to matters beyond her ken, and the remark she ventured now and then to slide in was one that bespoke a diffident, but not deficient understanding. A delighted glance of approbation occasionally escaped from Lord Glenmore, in homage to his wife, and as Lord Albert beheld this married happiness, he could not help sighing, as he thought "such might have been mine ;" and he almost unconsciously drew a parallel between Lady Glenmore and Adeline, in which he did not deceive himself in giving the decided palm to the latter.

When he was preparing to depart, he found it was so late that he drove home ; but when there, the same incapacity to settle himself to any occupation which he had before experienced returned, and he fancied that he might yet be in time for an hour of the ballet. So he ordered his carriage, made a brief toilette, and drove to the Opera-house. "It is too late," he thought, "to go to South Audley Street ; I shall disturb Lady Dunmelraise ;" but yet the idea that he had not called upon her that day haunted him painfully.

Arrived at the Opera, he walked in, and hearing, as he passed the pit-door a favourite air sung by Pasta, he made his way through the crowd, obtaining a tolerable place, and was listening intently to the music, when he was accosted by Mr. George Foley. The recollection of what he had suffered the previous evening came freshly to his feelings, like a dark, dense cloud, obscuring every other idea. Mr. Foley, either not seeing, or not choosing to see the coldness of his reception, pertinaciously kept up a conversation with him on various subjects, precisely in that quiet and self-satisfied manner, which is so insufferable to a person under feelings of irritation. Nor did Mr. Foley cease talking till he suddenly turned round, and saw some one in the boxes, to whom he nodded with much apparent familiarity of interest. Lord Albert mechanically turned his head also, and beheld Lady

Hamlet Vernon—who kissed her hand to him ; and both of them, as if by mutual consent, proceeded to join her. She was but just arrived, having been at a dinner at the Leinsengens, she said, and her face was lit up with more than ordinary animation as she greeted them on their entering ; then noticing to Lord Albert to take the seat next her in front of the box, she bent towards him, so as to whisper in his ear, “I heartily congratulate you ; I have just heard of the arrangements at the Leinsengens where I dined, as I have already told you, and where I heard all the finest things in the world said of you, as I have not yet told you ; but I assure you the generality of the persons there were, I really believe, for once sincere in what they said. But you do not express any satisfaction at this event yourself : why are you so exceedingly indifferent ?” and her eyes spoke a language which was any thing but that of indifference.

“ Because,” he said, “ I do not avow that the news you have heard is true. We must wait and see the event publicly announced, before one can have any feeling about it, one way or the other.” Lady Hamlet Vernon continued to banter him on his cautious reserve for some time ; but did not press the matter further, as she saw his dislike to being probed on the subject.

“ Only remember,” she whispered, “ you have one friend, who enters into all your joys and sorrows, and feels every thing that betides you with a keen perception of interest.” After some vain attempts on her part to unite Mr. Foley in a conversation with them, which she resumed aloud, he being perfectly aware that Lord Albert in fact engrossed her completely, took an early opportunity of withdrawing. Lord Albert remained till near the close of the ballet in earnest conversation with Lady Hamlet Vernon, interrupted only occasionally by chance visitors, who, seeing the preoccupied air, and observing the thoughtful expression of Lord Albert, did not long obtrude themselves. He would probably have remained where he was till the entire end of the performance, had not a sudden movement in the box opposite, attended with bustle, and some lady apparently fainting, caught his attention. He looked eagerly again, and in another minute recognised Lady Delamere, and thought in the reclining figure that he could trace a likeness to Lady Adeline Seymour. Hastily rising, he rushed out of the box, without

making any apology to Lady Hamlet Vernon, or mentioning the cause of his very abrupt departure.

When he arrived at the opposite side of the house, he found his fears and conjectures true ; and his heart smote him in an instant, as he figured to himself what Lady Adeline's feelings must have been, in seeing him occupied so long a time, and his attention so intensely fixed upon another, as he was conscious his had been on Lady Hamlet Vernon. Although Lady Adeline might not know who she was, yet the circumstance of his not having been near her all day, the reason of which she could not know; together with the fact which she saw, namely, that he preferred the society of another to hers, were all circumstances that struck him with self-condemnation, and his look and manner implied the full expression of tender penitence. But Lady Adeline was still insensible ; she could not see, or observe, *what* his feelings then were at beholding her thus ; but with Lady Delamere the case was different ; he thought he read in her cold reception of his offered services, and the penetrating glance which she cast upon him, her complete knowledge of all that had passed in his mind relative to Lady Hamlet Vernon, and he shrunk confused from her gaze.

This, however, was neither a time nor a place adapted for explanations ; and, indeed, to whom was he to make them ? To no one did he feel responsible but to Adeline ; to no one he felt would they be satisfactory, save to Adeline. He knew her mind was truth itself, and so utterly incapable of deception, that she could not believe that any one would deceive her ; he determined therefore to unbosom himself to her, and be forgiven. With these feelings, which were rapid and almost simultaneous in their effect, though language is slow in expressing them, he caught the sinking Adeline in his arms, and lifted her inanimate form into the corridor, where a seat being hastily taken from the box, he supported her, kneeling by her side. At this moment Mr. Foley appeared, breathless with haste, bearing some water and a smelling-bottle, which he proceeded to apply, while Lady Delamere aided him in his efforts to restore Adeline, and was assisted by several of their acquaintance who were passing by.

Lord Albert could only partially be of use, as one arm supported her ; but with the other he tenderly pressed her

hand as he bathed it in the water. Animation, after a few minutes, returned ; she opened her eyes, and gazed vacantly ; but in another moment her senses were fully restored ; and on recognising Lord Albert, she quickly closed her eyes again, and a sort of convulsive throb seemed about to make her relapse ; but struggling to disengage her hand, which he let drop with an expression of sorrow and dismay, Lady Adeline made an effort to recover herself ; and half rising, she turned to Lady Delamere, and said inarticulately, "I should like, dear aunt, to be taken home."

"Stop, for heaven's sake," cried Lord Albert d'Esterre, stepping forward, as if to catch her tottering frame ; "wait till you are more recovered."

"No," she said ; but speaking still as if to Lady Delamere, "I shall be better when I am at home ; dear aunt, let me go." Lady Delamere, judging of Adeline's feelings by her own observations of the circumstances which shethought had caused her sudden indisposition, said coolly, addressing Lord Albert, "Thank you, Lord Albert, but Adeline is the best judge of her own feelings." Then turning to Mr. Foley, she asked him "if he had seen her servants?" He answered in the affirmative ; and added, "the carriage will be up by this time certainly."

"Then," rejoined Lady Delamere, "have the goodness, Mr. Foley, to give your arm to my niece ;" and she continued, with marked emphasis, "Adeline dear, I will support you on the other side." It was impossible for Lord Albert to mistake what this arrangement implied ; his whole frame was convulsed, though he betrayed no gesture of suffering, but stood rooted to the spot, as his eyes gazed on her, walking away feebly between her two supporters, without thinking of following her ; and then, by a sudden impulse, he rushed after her, and arrived at the door just in time to see Mr. Foley get into the carriage, after having placed the ladies in safety, and to hear the word "home" pronounced by the footman as they drove from the door of the Opera-house.

He mechanically turned round, and with an agitation of mind that had allowed not of reflection, returned to Lady Hamlet Vernon's box. He sat down without speaking ; and, gazing on vacancy, remained for some time like one in a deep reverie. Fortunately, there was no one in the box

but themselves ; and though Lady Hamlet Vernon was quite aware of his situation, and partly guessed the cause, she was too deeply interested herself in the issue of the event to press indiscreetly into his feelings at that moment, but simply asked him, "if he were not well?" "Oh, quite well," he replied ; "only rather astonished.—It was,"—he stopped—seemed to muse again, and then he added to himself, "they went away together." Lady Hamlet Vernon's eyes filled with tears—(tears will come sometimes to some people when they are called)—she said, in a low voice, "I must always grieve for what gives you pain ; but I have thought?"—she paused.—Lord Albert fixed his eyes on her for an instant, as if he would inquire, "what have you thought?" but the latter, without appearing to deny that she *had* thought, at the same time added, in a hurried tone,

"Yet, my dear Lord Albert, let not my thoughts weigh with you ; let not a momentary appearance alone decide on any measure which may influence your whole life ; look dispassionately on appearances ; sound them, sift them thoroughly, ere you allow yourself to act upon them."—There was a gentle reason in these words, an expression of heartfelt interest in the speaker, which at the present instant was doubly efficacious in turning the current of his thoughts and feelings in favour of her who uttered them ; and he gave way to a warmth of expression in his reply which was joy to her heart. Still she repressed the triumph she felt at this impassioned answer ; and it was only when he handed her to her carriage, that the pressure of her hand spoke a tenderer language, which vibrated through his frame.

CHAPTER IV.

THOUGHTS FOR COUNSEL.

WHEN Lady Delamere returned with her niece, and the latter had been left in a state of comparative composure to the best of all earthly restoratives, sleep, Lady Dunmelraise listened with anxious interest to the relation of her daugh-

ter's sudden indisposition, which Lady Delamere did not hesitate to attribute to her having ~~expressed~~ Lord Albert's attentions to Lady Hamlet Vernon during the whole evening, in the very box opposite to them at the Opera.

"I observed her," said Lady Delamere, "for some time struggling with her feelings, and hesitated whether it were best to take notice of, or to allow them to subside uncommented upon : seeing, however, that at length all her efforts were unavailing, and that her agitation rather increased than the reverse, I judged it necessary to propose our returning home. At that instant, Adeline fainted ; and now, dear sister, I think that, for Adeline's sake, it is my duty to speak to you without reserve on the subject of Lord Albert d'Esterre. The state of your health, on your arrival in London, and the fear of agitating you, have alone prevented my touching on this subject sooner ; but I hope you will forgive me, and feel that I was right, when I acknowledge that I have already spoken generally to Adeline herself upon the prospects attendant on her engagement. -

"You will also readily believe, I trust, that, knowing your sentiments and principles, I could not say any thing that you would disapprove, nor that I would assume to myself any parental authority, which is alone your right, in what I said ; but at the same time I ventured upon what I conceived to be Lord Albert's very culpable neglect ; and, although I fear much more might have been said with truth, yet my counsel went merely to impress on Adeline's mind a sense of the seriousness of married life, and of the necessity of both parties examining thoroughly the grounds on which they rest their hopes of happiness, before they become bound indissolubly together. I also expatiated upon the propriety of her mixing in the great world during your stay in London, which would afford her an opportunity of judging many things which she could not do in a life of retirement. I added, that the same person is too often not the same, when placed in different scenes, and with different objects of attraction and temptation around him ; for I wished to open Adeline's eyes to a clear discernment of whatever might be necessary for her to know ; and, having done this, leave it to her own excellent understanding to draw the salutary conclusion."

"You are right, my dear sister, and I thank you ; but it

is strange that Adeline should never have mentioned this conversation to me. She never had a secret from me before in her lifetime."

" Do not blame Adeline, I entreat you. If there be any blame any where, it must rest with me ; for dreading the effect which my suspicions might have produced on your mind, while still suffering from your recent increase of malady, I could not at that time bring myself to enter upon a subject which I knew must harass you ; and, acquainted as I am with Adeline's superior prudence and rectitude of conduct,—qualities which she possesses, indeed, beyond most persons of her age,—I deemed it quite sufficient to give her that species of warning which would make her look warily to certain points, respecting the observation of which her very purity might have blinded her, but yet without saying any thing sufficiently decided for her to deem it a breach of duty not to repeat the conversation to you. Having explained this affair, I trust I have absolved the dear, ingenuous Adeline from the least blame, which might otherwise have attached to her concealing any thing of importance from you, her mother."

" Oh certainly, my dear sister; entirely so ; and it is needless to dwell on this longer. The matter of great moment, which I wish to discuss with you, is, what steps should now be taken in regard to Lord Albert d'Esterre ? for some active measure does appear necessary after this night's occurrence."

" Indeed it is a delicate business, and one on which I feel very diffident in giving advice ; but since you ask my opinion, I will not conceal from you, that Lord Albert's character appears to me to be much changed since his last visit to you, immediately after his return from the continent : indeed, how should it be otherwise, when, by all I can learn, he has associated only with those persons who form a distinct circle ; and among whom he must have imbibed, at least superficially, all those habits and prejudices which are directly opposed to his former life.

" You know, my dear sister, that our opinion of that coterie is pretty much the same ; and I believe it to be impossible for a young man to become entangled in such a society, and not lose all correct principle. This in itself would be a reason which would make me anxious for our

Adeline's happiness, if she were so connected ; for to what dangers would she not be exposed as a married woman, living in that class of persons ! Notwithstanding her firmness of character, I could not but dread the contamination of perpetual bad example : and the more so, as it does not appear in its own appalling form, but wears the semblance of elegance and innocent pleasure. Thinking of these things, and knowing, as I do, besides, that not only Lord Albert attaches himself in particular to one of the circle (I mean Lady Hamlet Vernon) but that the world are beginning to talk openly on the subject, I really think it is time some decision on your part should be taken."

"All that you say makes me very sorrowful, my dear sister," replied Lady Dunmelraise ; "and I see too clearly the truth of your advice not to follow it ; but then, you know, we must consider the dear Adeline's feelings ; we must endeavour to spare her present pain, so far as we consistently can with future and lasting happiness. But I fear, let the blow come as it may, it will fall heavily on her. I have myself not been without my suspicions, as I already told you, of Lord Albert's change of sentiments in respect to my daughter ; but knowing her deep attachment to him, and dreading the effects of a hasty overthrow of all her long-cherished hopes, having at the same time no positive proof of Lord Albert's delinquency, I could do no more, hitherto, than you have done ; that is, speak in general terms of the very great importance of a strict examination of oneself, and the object of one's attachment, previously to marriage, not only in regard to the more weighty considerations of principle and temper, but also in respect to those habits and pursuits, which either cement the delights of daily communication, or, if dissimilar, produce at first estrangement, and in time, it may be, indifference or disgust. Of all these, and such as these, I spoke minutely, and even ventured to throw out doubts respecting Lord Albert's occupations and recreations continuing to be of a nature that accorded with her own. I then hinted at a change of associates naturally leading to a change of feelings ; 'but,' I added, 'you are the only person, my dearest child, after all, who can decide upon the truth of these observations in this instance ; and what I recommend to you is, to look narrowly yourself to these points, and employ the interval before your final deci-

sion in determining this momentous question for yourself.'

"Thus far have I spoken to her. Since, however, the scene of to-night seems to have precipitated matters to a climax,—to the necessity, at least, of a disclosure of the extent of our fears,—I must endeavour to break them to her to-morrow in such a manner as will be least likely to shock her feelings ; but, alas ! I much fear that the shock has already been felt, has come to her in its worst and keenest guise, and on such a heart as hers I dread the consequences. At her years the blight of a cherished hope is often physically fatal ; the frame is not strengthened to bear the crush of sorrow, and life itself yields to the pressure." Lady Dunmelraise's voice faltered, and her sister felt an answering pang to that which she so touchingly expressed. "Still," resumed Lady Dunmelraise, after a moment's pause, "it will be kinder and wiser, in as far as respects addressing myself to Lord Albert, to let the matter take its own course, and end itself. The time when a final decision must be made is now very short ; I shall then have a right to demand an explicit avowal of his intentions, or to put a final termination to my daughter's engagement with him.

"Meanwhile, I shall speak unreservedly to her. Now that she has (poor dear ! my heart bleeds for her !) witnessed, at least once, a scene that confirms all my worst fears, she will be alive to the justice of my representations, and with her own quickness of perception and delicacy of feeling, will judge for herself on similar occasions, should such recur ; in which case, the dignity of her offended affection will strengthen her for the trial : for what we take upon ourselves to bear is always a burden more easily endured than that imposed upon us by another. If, however, we should be mistaken ; if, haply, we do Lord Albert injustice ; if appearances are deceptive, and that he is in fact unchanged ; we shall have spared much unnecessary pain, and all self-accusation for undue precipitation." The sisters having thus settled the point which involved the happiness of one so dear to them, separated for the night.

Lord Albert d'Esterre, on his part, when he reached home from the Opera, became the victim of those baffling feelings which had more than once torn his heart in pieces ; for although he felt that he had stronger grounds than ever to sus-

pect Lady Adeline of a preference for another, yet so long and so deeply rooted had been his dream of attachment for her, that at intervals a tide of tenderness returned, and he involuntarily dwelt on the idea, that one who had been considered by him as *his own*, one who professed to feel herself bound to him, could not, with some fault on his part, prove false to herself and him. And was he without fault in respect to his treatment of her? It was a question he did not dare to answer; but he felt sure, that whatever fancy played on the surface of his heart, Adeline *alone* was enshrined there; and this assurance came to him with greater power, as the excitement he experienced while he had been in the society of Lady Hamlet Vernon gradually died away when no longer in her presence.

The next morning he wavered for a considerable time, whether to go in person to inquire for Lady Adeline, or merely send; and his feelings of wounded pride and genuine affection, which latter surpasses all pride, alternately rose and fell in his breast. "I would not betray displeasure," he said to himself; "for, if the offence is real, displeasure would be too weak a feeling for so deep an injury, and, to a coquette, the knowledge that she gives pain is a triumph: I will not go, therefore; I will write." And he decided on despatching a note, pleading important business as the cause of his not attending personally to inquire for her, which excuse was in part true. After having so far satisfied himself by doing what he thought best under all circumstances, he went to Lord Glenmore's, to lose, if possible, the sense of his sorrow, in matters of so high and engrossing a nature, that he knew, could any thing prove a cure for love, they must.

Far different, however, from the feelings and thoughts which had agitated the breast of Adeline, her affectionate relatives, and Lord Albert himself, were those which agitated Lady Hamlet Vernon. She had but one thought, one intense interest, and she cared not by what means she followed up its success. In recalling the last scene in which she had been an actor, she was not likely to lose sight for a moment of the advantage she perceived that she had obtained over the object of her pursuit; and although entertaining little doubt as to the cause of Lady Adeline's indisposition, she was still anxious to assure herself that her sur-

mises were right in regard to it, and also to learn the visible effect which had been produced when Lord Albert hastened to her in the Opera House ; for although she thought she could not be at a loss to unravel the clue, yet, for a thousand reasons, she was most anxious to be acquainted beyond all possibility of doubt, with every thing respecting the occurrence.

For this purpose, she sent a note, early in the morning, to Mr. Foley, requesting him to lose no time in calling upon her. He was not tardy in obeying her summons, and when he came, she cautiously avoided at first entering upon the subject nearest her heart, and turned his attention to the circumstance of a change of ministry, asking him if he had heard any thing decisive on the subject. He repeated what had been reported the preceding evening, namely, that Lord Glenmore had certainly accepted office, and Lord Albert d'Esterre a post under him. This led to the subject of Lady Adeline's indisposition, and the question, whether the marriage between her and Lord Albert would ever take place. Mr. Foley replied, that he thought the thing very unlikely. A man engaged as Lord Albert now was, required, he conceived, a different sort of wife, if any wife were not *de trop*.

"But what occasioned the scene she made last night?" asked Lady Hamlet Vernon.

Mr. Foley replied, he thought there could be little doubt as to the cause ; adding, courteously, "You know Lord Albert was in your box all the evening ; and it could hardly be supposed that any person at all attached to him could see him engaged in earnest conversation with you so long a time, without apprehension as to the consequences."

Lady Hamlet Vernon endeavoured to suppress, at least to conceal, the agitation of pleasure which she felt ; and said, smiling, he was always a flatterer, but that there could be no foundation for the uneasiness ascribed to Lady Adeline's feelings, and that she was sure there was some other cause ; but really, she added,

"My great interest was to ascertain that *your interests* were safe in this ministerial change ; and if Lord Albert be really in power, I feel certain you *have* nothing to apprehend. As to Lady Adeline Seymour, I am quite of your opinion ; she is not at all calculated to be his wife. From the interest which Lord Albert has shown in my welfare, I really have a

feeling of regard for him, and I should be sorry to see him united to a woman who I am certain would not promote his happiness. Now do *you* think she would?"

"To confess the truth, I do not believe it. Lady Adeline is very amiable, very sweet, very simple-minded, but not at all fitted to play a part in the busy world. I could not imagine her the wife of a minister, or throwing any degree of lustre round an exalted station. Elegant and endearing in private life as she certainly is; depend upon it *that* is her sphere; take her thence, and she would be nothing."

Lady Hamlet Vernon seemed hazy in thought, was silent for a few moments, then turned to Mr. Foley, and fixing her eyes on his, asked, pointedly,

"But do you think she is fond of Lord Albert?"

"Fond! yes, perhaps so; the fondness of a child that has been told it ought to love something, and has never made any comparisons whereby to know what it likes."

"That will *not* do for Lord Albert d'Esterre, I am certain, and it would be madness in him to persevere in forming such a union. You, dear Mr. Foley, are intimate with her mother, Lady Dunmelraise; does she ever speak to you on the subject?" Then, without waiting for an answer, Lady Hamlet Vernon went on to say, "If an opportunity *should* occur, do you not think that, as a friend of the families, you ought to state your opinion of this unpropitious marriage; I mean without prejudice to Lord Albert d'Esterre, for I would not for the world be supposed to say any thing which could be offensive or undervaluing in regard to him. If you know him intimately, which I hope you will do, you would, I feel confident, not only like, but esteem him. It is from my doing so, who have had opportunities of reading his real character, that I think it a duty in any friend of Lady Dunmelraise to make her aware that her daughter is not suited to him, from an opposition of tastes and pursuits, different habits, and different ends in life, all which would render a union between them destructive of mutual happiness."

During Lady Hamlet Vernon's conversation, Mr. Foley's countenance underwent many changes, of which she was at first doubtful how to read the meaning. At length, after a considerable pause, he replied—"Lady Dunmelraise has never spoken to me on the business, and I do not see how I should, with any propriety, touch on any part of the subject

on which we have been conversing, unless, indeed, she were first to open the matter to me ; besides," (he added, with increasing agitation), " an attempt of the kind, on my part, would most probably defeat the end, as Lady Dunmelraise might suppose such advice, coming from me, was perhaps influenced by wishes and views of my own, and I would not ——"

" You would not," interrupted Lady Hamlet Vernon, " so far confess the truth, for I see plainly that you yourself love Lady Adeline," keeping her eyes on him as she spoke. Mr. Foley hesitated ; he seemed to wish to answer her, but knew not how.

" Now do not, my dear Mr. George Foley, from any false delicacy, be desirous of concealing the truth from me : you do love Lady Adeline Seymour ; and if so, why should you not urge your suit ? For you, I conceive this alliance to be very desirable ; it is quite different with regard to Lord Albert d'Esterre. A quiet, simple, domestic companion, such as you portray Lady Adeline to be, would prove exactly consonant with your wishes ; her fortune is vast ; and the general tenor of her education and life were well adapted to form her character to that sort of tranquil obedience which I know you deem a prime requisite in a wife. Lady Dunmelraise's interest in you is a great step in your favour ; fortune to you is a *great object* ; and the marriage would be such as would, I think, contribute to your wishes and your welfare."

Lady Hamlet Vernon saw that she had touched a theme in which Mr. Foley's interests were deeply involved ; for as she proceeded to expatiate on the various advantages which would attend Mr. Foley's adopting her advice, he listened with more and more attention, and even betrayed the greatest apparent pleasure. Lady Hamlet Vernon marked the progress she had made, and felt sure that the discovery at which she had now arrived, of the coincidence of his feelings with her own, laid a sure foundation for the accomplishment of her plans, while, at the same time, it removed from herself, in a great measure, the danger of being thought to be the principal mover in a matter which required so much tact and delicacy to carry it through successfully : she saw clearly, that it was only requisite, by following up her counsel to Mr. Foley (which was in fact to confirm him in his own wishes), to overcome any scruples which he might have

entertained, from the fear of appearing to act on selfish motives alone ; and Lady Hamlet Vernon was confident, from this conversation, that she had already made very great progress. It had required only a spark to set the train on fire ; and she felt certain that every word she uttered would render him more alive to the true state of his feelings, and consequently more apt to betray them in his conduct towards Lady Adeline.

Lady Hamlet Vernon had too much knowledge of the world, and of human nature, to press the matter further at the present moment, or attempt to bind, by any direct promise, a person who only required the spring of his desires to be set in action, in order to play his own part. Mr. Foley, too, seemed little inclined, at the present moment, to enter any further on the subject, and by tacit consent it was suffered to drop ; but when he took leave of Lady Hamlet Vernon, it was only a natural consequence of the counsel she had given him, that he should bend his steps towards South Audley Street, to make his inquiries for Lady Adeline. How easy is it for the stronger to direct the weaker mind to good or evil, without exciting any suspicion in the latter that it is assuming the mastery, or doing any thing but what it meant to do of its own proper movement ; and what small occurrences sometimes determine a line of conduct either virtuously or the reverse !

Thus it was with Mr. George Foley in the present instance. It certainly had crossed his mind more than once, that Lady Adeline Seymour would make him a very eligible wife, and his affections (such at least as he could have entertained for any object, *blazé* and apathetic as he had become from a long course of idleness and dissipation) had undoubtedly been directed towards her ; but the knowledge of the existing engagement between Lord Albert d'Esterre and herself, and a certain apprehension, frequent in timid minds that are neither quite good nor quite bad, lest he should forfeit Lady Dunmelraise's protection, had always checked his hopes, and kept these aspirations in subjection : but it required only the suggestions of one somewhat less timid than himself on this head, to direct his views to a determined pursuit of the object ; and he resolved, with proper caution, to feel his way, but, at the same time, to lose no opportunity of following up Lady Hamlet Vernon's advice.

CHAPTER V.

A VISIT TO THE NEW-MADE MINISTER'S WIFE.

WHEN Lord Albert had sent his note of inquiry to Lady Adeline Seymour, he proceeded to Downing-street to meet Lord Glenmore, there to enter on his official duties ; and, notwithstanding the agitation of his mind on other subjects, he went prepared to commence his new career with that glow of ardour, which, when tempered by prudence, is so conducive to honourable success. The reports which had so strongly prevailed for the last two days in the great world, of Lord Glenmore's appointment in the ministry, and of Lord Albert d'Esterre's being joined with him in the office which he had accepted, were now confirmed by a public announcement of the changes that had taken place.

Of course there were different opinions as to the eligibility of the measures resorted to, as there always are in similar cases ; but which were, for the most part, formed according to the interests and wishes of opposing parties, without any real feeling or care for the public welfare : but, fortunately for the well-being of that public, there are higher powers overruling the petty engines of mortal government, and even the evil passions of mankind are sometimes made subservient to the ways of Providence. Henry the Eighth, when he threw off the papal yoke, and became an instrument of mighty and effective operation in the religious and moral destinies of Britain, thought little of any other end than that of securing his own illicit and ambitious projects : but in his day and generation he was the appointed means to bring about that invaluable constitution, which, resting on a firmer basis than mere worldly wisdom could devise, we may be confident will always have able defenders raised up for its support—whether they be those who pursue worldly ends alone, and entertain no other dream in their philosophy, or whether some hand of conscientious and religious principle guide the helm ; not that the choice of persons can therefore be indifferent, for human means are still to be employed for

human measures ; only that in this circumstance, as in all others, there remains a point of confiding refuge to flee to, even when the political horizon appears to good men overcast.

At the present season, when difficulties of an almost insurmountable nature seemed to gather round the minister, and to impede the easy course of government, the accession of such a man as Lord Glenmore, whose character stood too high for any suspicion to attach to his integrity, and whose situation was too independent to admit the surmise of his being influenced by motives of personal interest, was a matter of the last importance ; the same might in a degree be said of Lord Albert d'Esterre, with the exception that he was younger, and that this was his first step in the career of his public life.

To Lady Tilney and her political friends, the recent changes were certainly any thing but agreeable ; for, so long as Lord Glenmore remained unconnected with party, she considered that he was yet to be gained over to that whose interests she espoused : and Lord Albert d'Esterre having likewise taken the same course, was an additional cause of regret to her ; for she had looked upon him as a much easier prize than the other, and one of nearly equivalent value. It was therefore with unqualified disappointment that she heard the confirmation of those fears which the current whisper of the preceding days had not prepared her to receive with calmness.

On Lady Hamlet Vernon, this circumstance acted with a different effect. When she heard the intelligence of the changes in the ministry confirmed, she considered it as an additional circumstance of self-congratulation, superadded to those which had arisen from the occurrence at the Opera and her conversation with Mr. Foley. Lady Hamlet Vernon, though ambitious, was a person attached to no party ; and though the love of power was predominant in her nature, it was for the sake of its own exercise, without any reference to any political side of the question : she only saw, therefore, in Lord Albert's appointment, the first step towards a career which would involve him at once in absorbing interests, and leave his mind more easy to be diverted into a channel in accordance with her wishes, and more likely to be drawn off from that attachment which was de-

structive of them. She thought too, and with some probability, that it was a measure which would be discordant with Lady Adeline's views of private happiness, and might possibly therefore influence the fulfilment of the engagement between her and Lord Albert d'Esterre.

While the parties in question took these two opposite views of the business, there was a third who deplored it in all sincerity of heart, and already sickened under the idea of the protracted absences, and the bustle of the public career, in which she was alternately either to be the sufferer, or be called upon to share: with the sense, however, of submission due in a wife to the interests and views of her husband, she prepared to receive the congratulations of her friends, and to fulfil the duties which she foresaw must attend on her situation, with as much cheerfulness and alacrity as she could command.

Lord Glenmore having told her that concealment was no longer necessary respecting the arrangements now finally adjusted, he bade her in the course of the day acquaint her family with the event; and, on his leaving her, she immediately communicated the intelligence to her parents. The first to congratulate her was Lord Melcombe, who considered the matter as a piece of good fortune, and rejoiced in this addition to his child's happiness. While offering his fond wishes for Lord Glenmore's success, he added, with a smile;

"I think, Georgina, he ought to be satisfied with your first *coup d'essai* in diplomacy, for you almost persuaded me yesterday that this event was quite as improbable as my own appointment to office."

In the course of the day a host of friends—for what persons in power ever lacked these?—called to pay their compliments to the wife of the newly-created minister; some came from curiosity, some in sincerity, some with envious feelings, and some with views of interest. Among those of the latter class may be enumerated the Leinsengens, the Tenderdens, and the Tilneys, with smiles on their lips and detraction in their hearts; the one not believing Lady Glenmore's indifference to her situation to be real, and the other two, who knew her better, despising her for her childish folly.

"Well, my dear," said the Comtesse Leinsengen, entering her apartment like a figure made of clockwork, that glides

into the room on a stand, "let me see how you do look under this *changement de décoration*: just the same, I declare! *est-il bien possible?*" Staring at her, " *Tout cela ne vous fait ni froid ni chaud*—dat is impossible. *En resto*—you seem de very ting for your *poste*, *et je vous en fait mon compliment*; for you will never be at a loss to know vat countenance *tenir* as yours does not undergo any change." The beautiful colour which tinged Lady Glenmore's cheek at this speech proved the contrary, as she replied;

" You are mistaken, Comtesse; there are many things which would affect me in a lively manner: and indeed the present subject of your congratulation is far from indifferent to me; but——"

" *Allons donc, une confidence*; at least we shall know what you do or do not care for," interrupted the Comtesse Leinsengen.

" As far as that confidence goes, certainly. I do not care, for instance, in the least, either for power or place, in as far as regards myself, and I prefer a quiet country life to that of London; but as my husband has considered it right to take this step, I must teach myself to like it too." The announcement of Lady Tenderden and Lady Tilney interrupted this uncongenial *âtre-dâtre*; and the latter, to hide her chagrin and disappointment under an apparent friendly zeal, flew up to Lady Glenmore in her most energetic manner, and assured her, that although she could never agree with Lord Glenmore in politics, yet from personal regard she sincerely wished him joy of his public success, and hoped, that now he had the ball at his foot, he would use it to a good purpose. " It is one thing to be at the bottom of the ladder, and another upon it," she added; " and perhaps we may see Lord Glenmore doing as so many others have done before now, looking down on his old prejudices and mistakes, and taking up quite a different view of the subject."

Lady Glenmore was silent, but received Lady Tilney's expressions of kindness with her usual sweetness and courtesy of manner. Lady Tenderden joined in the congratulation.

" At length, my sweet lady," she said, " you are enthroned, and we all come to do you homage. But how very discreet you were; never betrayed, by word, look, or gesture, the secret which you were quite sure of; you are really

cut out for the part you have to play. I envy you *votre petite air moue et doucereux*; don't you, Lady Tilney?"

"Nothing can be better," she replied; "I prophesy that she will play her part well."

"You are exceedingly obliging," Lady Glenmore replied, "but I have no part to play. My husband, being in the ministry, luckily does not impose any duty upon me; besides that of living more in the world than I might otherwise do."

"Poor lady, I pity you!" said Lady Tenderden, ironically.

"You will change your ideas, I foresee that," said Lady Tilney, prophetically.

"You will remain just what you are," said the Comtesse Leinsengen, impertinently, when the door opened, and the Duke of Mercington entered.

"I beg you to receive my warmest congratulation, my dear Lady Glenmore," he said, approaching her in his most *empressé* manner, as if his whole heart was in his words, and bowing to the other ladies slightly as he passed them. "I give you and Glenmore joy alike; him that he has gained his wish, and you in the consciousness that he has done so; for I know that your happiness must be *mutual* to render it really happiness."

"Oh, duke, I assure you all your compliments are thrown away upon that lady, on that subject at least, for she declares not to like to be a minister's wife at all."

"Impossible! she is joking," replied the duke, looking at Lady Glenmore with one of those apparently ingenuous smiles which habit had forced upon his features, and which once were captivating so long as they were natural; "impossible that you who were formed to shine in society should shrink from a situation for which you are so singularly well adapted."

"You are too good, duke, and I accept your flattering judgment upon *credit*, for I have not been tried yet, and I may disappoint you."

"Oh never, we all know how charming you are; don't we, Lady Tilney?"

"Yes, duke, you know we all know how to your judgment in every thing, and I am sure we shall not begin to differ on this point," she replied, with an air of pique that was ill concealed under an affected *bonhommie*.

"We are not come here," said the Leinsengen, whisper-

ing Lady Tenderden, "to listen to all his *fadaises*; *c'est le radotage* dat we have been used to hear uttered by turns to every object of a fresh *engouement* for these last ten years." Then gliding up to Lady Glenmore, she added, "I am quite charmed to see you *en des mains si sûres*, persons who will give you such excellent advice; and now dat I have rendered you *mes hommages*, I make *mes adieus*. Monsieur le duc, I hope to see you at my next *levée*; Lady Glenmore of course; Lady Tilney, *au revoir*." And then, when she reached the door, "Ah ça, by-de-way, vill you, Lady Tenderden, go vid me to-night to *le théâtre Française*?"

"I should be delighted, but I am engaged to Lady Glenmore. Is not this our evening?" turning to the latter.

"Yes; but I beg you will not consider that binding."

"Oh, but I do, though, so you must go with me."

"Of course," said the Comtesse Leinsengen, contemptuously, "I am extremely sorry, *mais il faut se consoler*;" and turning, she glided away, but first whispered to Lady Tilney as she passed, "We shall have nothing now but this tiresome *petite nouveauté*;" and she shrugged her shoulders and departed.

"What is the matter with the Comtesse?" asked the Duke of Mercington; "that *air d'imperatrice enragée* does not at all become her."

"No," replied Lady Glenmore, laughing, "I never knew any one that it did."

"Some persons," rejoined the duke, "some dark beauties, may look well under the effect of a storm, though I confess I had always rather see the lambent flame than the forked lightning;" and he looked his implied admiration of Lady Glenmore.

Lady Tilney did not know exactly what part to play in a scene where she felt she was not the principal, although it is said there have been times and seasons when she thought it politic to kiss *even the foot of a person* placed in a situation of imaginary greatness, and whose favour she forgot herself so far as to court. She had come, however, to Lady Glenmore with other views than either those of curiosity or congratulation. Lady Tilney felt, that in the situation which Lady Glenmore now held, she might with ease have led a party in society independent of Lady Tilney or any of her coterie; and a fear that she might take this step determined

altered countenance half spoke the nature of her intended counsel before she gave it utterance. Lady Adeline's own feelings were too much in accordance with her mother's, for her not to read the cause of the expression she saw painted on her face ; and although she had forced herself to leave her apartment, and to appear at the usual hour, and even endeavoured to wear her own placid smile, in order not to give Lady Dunmelraise unnecessary anxiety, still the very endeavour betrayed the real state of her heart. The business of the breakfast passed mechanically and in silence, with the exception of an interchange of those few kindly monosyllables which convinced them mutually of the participation each took in the other's anguish ; and while Lady Adeline was trying to suppress starting tears, Lady Dunmelraise determined to break this cruel silence, and without preamble to come at once to the subject.

" My dearest Adeline, I need not tell you, love, that I feel with you the sorrow and mortification of the occurrence of yesterday evening ; and it has come with double force on me, seeing the anguish it has brought upon you. However much I may have been prepared for it by what I have observed in Lord Albert's altered manner, yet I confess I am surprised at the want of openness in his conduct, a want with which I never should have thought he could have been charged. Love, it is true, is easily directed into a new channel, unless religious principle confirm it in its original course ; but even where there is no sin, according to the world's acceptation of sin in such change, still, from the opinion I have hitherto entertained of his natural disposition, I thought he would, with that ingenuousness of character for which I have given him unbounded credit, have at least confessed the truth, openly ; a line of conduct which, had he adopted, I am confident that, however heavily the avowal might have fallen on your heart, there would yet have remained a consolation in thinking that he was still worthy of your esteem, and then an honest pride of the consciousness of self-desert would have come in aid to sustain you to bear up against desertion. I begin, however, to fear that esteem can have no part in our sentiment towards him ; for why should concealment be necessary, if, at least, the cause of his estrangement from us were worthy of himself ?"—Lady Adeline covered her face with her hands, as she rested

her arms on the table before her, and her tears trickled through her delicate fingers, but she could not speak.—“Calm yourself, my dearest Adeline; for my sake, for your own sake, for resignation’s sake, bear up under this heavy affliction: it is a sore and early trial for you, I well know; but if rightly entertained, it will bring its blessing with it, as all our trials do. I do not mean to pretend that you are not to suffer, or give a cold unfeeling philosophy to still the throbings of a young wounded heart; but I would lead you to sources of consolation, which, although they may seem harsh and bitter at first, will in time, and with God’s blessing, have a beneficial effect.”

“I know,” replied Lady Adeline, making an effort to speak, “I know, dearest mamma, that all you say is meant in love, and is balm to me, but these tears, these sobs, must have their course.”

Lady Dunmelraise replied to this natural appeal with answering tears; and having first regained composure, she went on to say:

“Think for a moment, my best child, how hopeless, how truly wretched, would have been your situation, had you, when united to Lord Albert, discovered, when it was too late, that his affections were not entirely yours; and that he had, on his part, either from motives of false delicacy, or, from what was still worse, a desire to possess your fortune, persisted in fulfilling an engagement in which his heart at best had a divided interest;—think, dearest, what would have been your feelings in such a case, and how mercifully you are dealt by in the present suffering, in comparison of the irremediable sorrow which would then have been your portion!

“I need not now recall to your mind what I said on Lord Albert’s apparently altered state of feelings on our arrival in town. You, I am certain, saw the change as well as myself, and felt it,—how deeply, I hardly can bear to think; though we both seemed tacitly to agree, that it would be better to await the result, than precipitate it by any premature remarks, either to himself, or between each other.—And indeed this conduct, in a great measure, it is still my opinion should be preserved; only, in as far as regards ourselves, my dearest child, neither my sense of duty, nor my sense of sorrow, will permit of longer silence on a sub-

jest which, I grieve to confess, judging by appearances, is already settled ; and it is with a view to prepare you for such an issue, rather than to direct you to show any alteration in your conduct towards Lord Albert, that I have thus spoken : when I say show no alteration, it is impossible that that advice could be literally followed, after having seen a person avowedly, under the most sacred engagement to yourself pass the entire evening in the society of another, whose general character will not authorize the supposition that such attentions were without an especial object, and that too on a day on which he had pleaded important business as his excuse for your not seeing him ; but what I mean by your showing no alteration of manner towards him is, that neither our opinions nor our decisions should be made known to him in this stage of the business."

Lady Adeline had now mastered herself sufficiently to listen with calmness to all her mother said ; and she had drawn a seat near her, and held Lady Dunmelraise's hand tenderly in hers, replying by a gentle pressure to the sentiments she uttered : and now, when she could again give her thoughts utterance, she said :

" Speak on, dearest mamma, for even my rebel heart is soothed by listening to your gentle voice."

Lady Dunmelraise continued, " There are many reasons, you see, love, for this line of conduct :—In the first place, we have only, my sweet child, our own observations and surmises to guide us ; and although these, I grant, are strong," (Lady Adeline sighed heavily in answer to this remark,) " yet to act upon them would look like forcing Lord Albert to an immediate decision, a step unwise, and unworthy of us, and whichever way it ended would leave a doubt whether the decision were entirely from his heart or not.—Besides, as yet he may have erred, and perhaps become penitent ; if so, his own spontaneous confession alone could be a surety for his sincerity. Then too, my love, I must also remind you, that by nothing do a young woman's prospects suffer so much, on her first entry into life, as by becoming the object of the world's observation and idle talk, especially on the subject of a disappointment in love or marriage. All that the generality of the world know at present, concerning the existing engagement between yourself and Lord Albert, is, that your dear father and his parents have

considered that you were by birth, fortune, and apparently by disposition when children, united to each other ; should you grow up, mutually entertaining the same affection which you then evinced, that in such a case your union would be a matter of congratulation to the families of both parties. In short, it was one of those alliances that are often talked of among children seemingly adapted to each other, but to be finally dissolved or fulfilled, as circumstances should hereafter decide.

" How far your own affections have become bound up in this engagement, or how far Lord Albert has proved himself worthy or not of the intended union, is hitherto a matter wholly unknown, and uncared for, by the world at large : but now, however, that you are in the scene of London, young, new, and with various extraneous advantages to excite envy, if the affair were made a topic of discussion, the ill-natured part of the community will be too glad to seize upon any *esclandre* that might answer them for a nine days' novelty ; and such a hazard, your own delicacy will point out to you, is therefore carefully to be avoided. Till lately, the happy termination of our wishes had seemed probable, and you, dearest child, have, I fear, given way to the belief that it was impossible it should fail : but, however painful it may be to us both, in the several relations in which we stand implicated in this business, it is, you will allow, some satisfaction to think, that the sacredness of these feelings will not necessarily be broken in upon by a vulgar prying public ; and that, in short, the world need know no more of the matter than what I have already stated.

" We have only, therefore, as I before remarked, to await the period when decision must of course be made ; that will be when we are in the country, and when we shall escape all the unpleasant remarks which would take place were we actually on the scene. Let me hope also, dearest Adeline, that your eyes being self-opened to the disappointment, you will know where to seek for succour against yourself, and which alone can enable you to bear the blow, come when it may."

" Indeed, dearest mamma," said Lady Adeline, with that under tone of voice that seems to fear its own sound, " whatever pain I endure, I perfectly agree with you in all you have said, and implicitly yield to your counsel ; not only be-

cause it is my duty and interest to do so, but because I see the matter exactly in the same light. Oh, I could have borne all, had Albert only been more open and honest with me : but why was he so cruel as to deceive me ? why was he so tenderly affectionate to me at Durnebrae, after his return from abroad ? why did he write to me so kindly ? why has he, since we have been in London even, made such constant allusions to past and future happiness ? Why all this, and then so suddenly and cruelly neglect me for another ? for I am sure he does love another : mamma, do you not think he does ?"

" Alas ! what comfort can I give you ? You have seen with your own eyes, and I must refer you, love, to your own feelings ; who can so well tell all things as they ?"

" But, dearest mamma, do you not think, that if he really did love another he would have told me so ?"

" Why, dearest, it is difficult to reply to that question. Albert's good feelings and principles could not be overthrown at once. It is never thus. In a vicious career, people become unprincipled and hardened by degrees. He may have found his heart estranged from you, and yet in the first instance have been ashamed to own it, even to himself. The first step to evil is the *deceitfulness* of sin : with how many subterfuges does it not conceal its true nature : it blinds the eyes, lest, looking upon its native deformity, it should terrify its victim. There is nothing so likely to have this fatal tendency, as the constant society and intercourse with persons whose conduct, if not licentious (though I fear too many of them deserve that epithet), is not yet guided by any fixed or determined principle of action ; whose lives at best are spent from day to day without any serious thought, and without regard to any thing but selfish indulgence. Albert has great influence, and there may be more reasons than one why the party with whom he seems at present to associate should wish to entangle him. I augured ill of his happiness from the moment I heard of the circle in which he lived ; and it came to me with as much surprise as sorrow, for I never could have thought to find one of his dispositions and habits (setting aside principle) making such a choice of society. This it is which leads me to suppose that some stronger power of evil than a mere love of idle pleasure has lured him into the danger. But let this be your greatest comfort,

that you are not his wife, and are not to be thrown among persons of such a stamp as his present associates ; for whatever worldly advantages they may possess, I should tremble for you, my dear child, were you cast into a situation of such imminent peril to reason and to virtue. A woman, to a certain extent, must mingle with the associates of her husband ; and such as these are, so in time must become, likewise, her own character ; for however incongruous they may be to her tastes and feelings at first, yet if she is young, inexperienced, and pliant, the brilliancy and polish of their exterior, and their whole attractions, must dazzle and mislead her better judgment ; and from the idea alone of pleasing her husband, in as far as virtue and religion do not seem to forbid it, she will conform herself to the habits and manners of those around her, not being aware how these react again upon the general tone of her own character."

" But perhaps," said Lady Adeline, timidly, and while a feverish flush of hope and tenderness deepened in her cheek, " perhaps, were I his wife, I might reclaim——"

" Ah, dearest child," interrupted Lady Dunmelraise " never hazard evil that good may come of it ; never rely upon such a precarious contingency, nor upon your own strength ; seek not temptation, — that is presumptuous. Were you indeed his wife—as there is every reason at present to be thankful you are not—then would have come the duty of that trial ; but now another is appointed you, my love. Let us take what is, and think only of that. We must not wilfully rush into danger, to indulge selfish gratification."

Lady Adeline threw herself into her mother's arms, and wept unrestrainedly. " My dearest child, it has been a painful task to me to give you pain. Sooth this anguish, I beseech you, and assist me in the performance of what I feel is my duty, by regaining as much command over yourself as you possibly can."

While Lady Dunmelraise was yet speaking, a servant brought in a note addressed to Lady Dunmelraise : it was from Lord Albert. She opened, and having read it, gave it to Lady Adeline, who had known by its very twist who it came from, and was in breathless anxiety to see its contents.

" It is worded kindly," said Lady Dunmelraise, " but he

could not do otherwise ; and at the same time, I dare say, he felt much awkwardness, and did not know how to come in person. I shall answer it, my love, in the same spirit of gentleness ; merely saying you are quite recovered, only suffering the remains of languor after the sickness produced by the heat of the Opera last night. And if Lord Albert should call in the course of the day, do, I entreat you, betray no unusual symptoms of agitation."

Lady Adeline, with an aching head and still sobbing breath, promised acquiescence ; and in despite of herself, a ray of hope seemed to emanate from the note, which cheered her, she scarce knew why, and enabled her to suppress her emotion. Then retiring to her own chamber she there sought in prayer that strength and resignation which she knew no earthly comforter could bestow on her.

After the exhaustion of spirits which this conversation with her daughter had produced, Lady Dunmelraise felt the promised visit of her sister would be a cordial to her ; nor did she wait long ere Lady Delamere came. As soon as the latter was made acquainted with what had passed, she said, " Dear Adeline ! I expected this from her ; yet her behaviour is supereminently amiable on this occasion, and must reward you for all your sorrows. I perfectly agree with you on the policy of the line of conduct you are to adopt with Lord Albert ; and in pursuance of this, should you not call upon the Tresyllians ? You know they are arrived."

" Certainly I will ; for although my health has for many years precluded my mixing with the world, and exonerated me from all visiting, I shall forego my general rule, and call on them without delay."

" Come with me now," said Lady Delamere ; " my carriage is at the door, and I will bring you home again." To this proposal the sisters agreed, and they departed together. The Tresyllians were not at home, and Lady Dunmelraise felt glad to escape the meeting. On her return, she learned from Adeline, whom she found admirably serene and composed, though pale, and with her eyes swollen with weeping, that Lord Albert had not been there. The fact was, that the latter had been in reality occupied the whole day ; and it was only on his return to his house, late in the afternoon, that he received Lady Dunmelraise's answer to his note, his mind having been as it were forcibly taken off from the sub-

ject nearest to his heart. He had profited by that wholesome constraint which the occupations of men afford them, and prevents that causing of the tender feelings which enervates and unfit for useful exertion. Something like reason, and the distinct perception of things which it never fails to bring in its train, had consequently resumed a sway over him ; and, when this was the case, his heart could not avoid turning to the object of its first pure and honourable affection with that ineffable sweetness of sensation that attends on innocent and happy love. Then, half forgetting, half scorning, the suspicions he had entertained, and which the scene of the preceding evening had but too plausibly confirmed, he determined to call in South Audley-street to see Lady Dummelraise at least, if not Adeline ; and as he walked along, absorbed in mingled feelings that made him insensible to all the noise and bustle of the busy crowd he passed through, he found himself quickly at the door : his hand was on the knocker, when a cabriolet drove up, and out of it stepped Mr. Foley.

All Lord Albert's philosophy was overthrown by this incident ; all his love for and trust in Lady Adeline was destroyed ; and his first impulse was to leave a house in which he conceived he had no longer any interest in seeking its inhabitants, but, the next moment, his better judgment, if not his pride in not seeming to yield to a successful rival, determined him to fulfil his first intention ; and making rather a cold and haughty return to Mr. Foley's salutation, they both entered the door together.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FRENCH PLAY.

It was late when Lady Glenmore returned from Lady Melcombe's ; and as she drove home she pleased herself with the idea of talking over with her husband the insipid and insignificant scene of the morning, as well as losing in his society the recollection of those uneasy feelings respect-

ing Lady Tenderden, which Lady Tilney's allusion to past times had created : and then glowed in her breast the one natural, honest hope, which was ever uppermost in Lady Glenmore's heart, of meeting her husband for the simple, single pleasure she enjoyed of *being in his presence*.

"Is Lord Glenmore come home?" was her first question when she alighted from her carriage ; the "No" was chilling.

"Did he leave any message ? has he sent any note ?" Still "No, no," sounded heavily in her ears. She prepared, however, for his return, by taking more pains with her toilette than usual ; and when she had finished arraying herself, not according to the code of the *Belle Assemblée* or *Feuilles des Modes*, but in accordance with that of her own young innocent face, her glass told her she had not done so in vain. She then sat for some time with tolerable patience, first taking up one book, then another, then throwing them down again ; going to the instrument, touching a few chords ; turning over the ornamented leaves of a Lilliputian music-book, invisibly written with a crow-quill ; pushing it away, leaving it to tumble down off the desk as it might, and going to the window, the shutters of which she had not allowed the servant to close, in order that she might listen to every cabriolet that passed. At length she rang the bell, and was told that it was eight o'clock.

"Is there no message from Lord Glenmore ?" "No, my lady. Shall dinner be served ?" "No—yes—no, yes ; bring up something, any thing is enough ;" and away she went to her splendid board in her splendid apartment, with a train of levied domestics, to sit down to a lonely dinner with an aching heart. She hastily dismissed the servants, and then leaning back on her chair, and suffering the tears that were choking her to flow over her face—

"I wish we were poor, and he not political," she said, sobbing ; "I should not then be left alone, I should not be absent from him." A servant entered with a note. She endeavoured to conceal her tears, and, hastily opening it, read a few kind words from Lord Glenmore, which spoke his regret at being prevented from meeting her at dinner ; and hoping she would go early to the French play with Lady Tenderden, where he would join them if possible. The ebb and flow of young feelings are very quick ; and this note

was such a cordial, that, as she ran up stairs, she carolled in the gayety of her altered feelings : so soon had she forgot disappointment in anticipated pleasure.

In a few minutes more she was in her carriage on the way to the French play. When she came into the box, she found it empty, and the play begun. Lady Tenderden was not arrived ; and by the time she had cast a glance round the house, bowed to some of her acquaintance, and settled her shawls, &c.c., she turned all her attention to the stage. It was a play which had collected a class of audience seldom frequenting that house ; for it was one of those sterling comedies of Molière's, apart from his too frequent grossness, which, with the true legitimate intention of comedy, lashed the follies of the age for which it was written, and was not without its prototype in the present. *Les Précieuses Ridi-cules* is a play that all unsophisticated natures must enjoy, even those who, as in the case of Lady Glenmore, were not acquainted with the times and the persons it was written to satirize ; and she herself evinced the pleasure she derived from it, by laughing naturally and frequently. Her merry laugh called the observation of several persons, not accustomed to see pain, or pleasure, or amusement, ever expressed by any outward sign, and who attributed to the uneducated only such marks of unconstrained nature ; but others, again, (some few), were pleased at any thing so unlike what they generally beheld ; and it conveyed to *them* a reflected sensation of freshness of enjoyment, such as they remembered to have felt when life was new, and before they were schooled by the false, fastidious system of the world of ton, or *blazed* to the zest of pleasure.

" What a pity," observed Lord Baskerville, speaking between his teeth, in his company voice, " that that very pretty Lady Glenmore should make herself so conspicuous."—He was in the Comtesse Leinsengen's box, within one of that in which Lady Glenmore was sitting.

" Not at all," replied Spencer Newcomb ; " she only draws attention ; and one cannot look at a prettier woman."

" *Peut-être*," said the Comtesse Leinsengen, " she does it for dat very purpose, and takes dis new way of being *distingué*."

" Insufferable!" rejoined Lord Baskerville ; " if she were

as beautiful as an angel, she would disgust me with those *retardére* manners."

"I believe," said Mr. Leslie Winyard, with a yawn, "that I must really take compassion on her, and give her some good advice on the subject of education."

"*L'affaire est faite*," rejoined the Comtesse, "if you take her *en main*; *mais tout est pour le mieux dans ce meilleur des mondes possibles*."

Having thus settled the matter in Lady Tilney's box, Mr. Leslie Winyard proceeded to that of Lady Glenmore, there to commence his destined essay on education. "I am delighted," he said, "to see you in such good health, and so intent on immortalizing Molière. If he could only know what homage you are paying his talents in these expressions of your mirth, how delighted he would be!"

"Hush," said Lady Glenmore, "I will talk presently; but now I want to listen to the play it is so amusing."

"So it is," he replied; "and I am glad to be with any one so natural, and so much of my own way of thinking. I will, if you allow me, occupy this place," taking the front seat, "and we will enjoy the thing together."

"Certainly," said Lady Glenmore, with a pleased expression of countenance, which, though he knew better than to ascribe its influence to himself, he was yet gratified to think that others might do so; and while she continued intent on what was passing on the stage, Mr. Winyard was busily looking round, *à-la-dérobée*, to see what remarks were passing on his being alone with the new minister's wife. This, however, was a privilege which he did not long enjoy; for Lord Rainham and Mr. Spencer Newcomb came in to make their bows and give their meed of homage. After having courteously received them, Lady Glenmore turned again to the stage, and they went on talking in an under tone together at the back of the box.

"I wish," said Lord Rainham, addressing Mr. Spencer Newcomb, "I wish that we had any dramatist as clever now-a-days to lash our follies."

"Do you think you would like it if you had?" asked his friend. "Somehow or another, for my own part, I feel I get on just as well without, and I suspect I am too old to be whipped. Depend upon it, the reason why we are so well amused with this and some of the other comedies of Molière

is, because we think we are only laughing at another generation, and another nation, whose *ridicules* have nothing in common with our own. No, no ; believe me, we English do not like to be satirized ; we can bear it less well than any other nation I know. Broad farce is our *sauce piquant* ; but the exact delineation of our peculiar vices and follies would not be well received, and indeed I doubt if legitimate comedy, however well acted or written, would go down at all."

" My good friend," said Lord Rainham, " this very piece is not so widely different from the follies of the present day as you may at first sight imagine."

" Perhaps so," replied his friend ; " but one need not put on the cap, you know ; and then nobody can tell whether it fits or not."

Lord Rainham continued (following the thread of his own fancy, rather than replying to the speaker, as was his wont), " Change the names and the modes of *Les Précieuses Ridicules* to those of a certain set existing now-a-days, and the principle of vanity and folly is much the same in both ; only that, perhaps, on the whole, those of the Hôtel de Ramboillet were more to women's advantage after all ; and had they not pushed their system too far, it might have lasted longer than the present dynasty of *ton* is likely to do. Both are entirely false, both equally far from the real, nay, genuine charm of true good society.

" However, in all the freaks that vanity and fashion play, there have been, and ever will be, some redeeming characters, who mix with all the *fanfaronnade* of the day, and yet remain uninfected with the epidemic follies. She, for instance," indicating Lady Glenmore with a look ; " can any thing be more young and fresh, in mind and heart as well as years, more gay, more natural ?"

" Certainly not ; and it is quite invigorating to witness her unsophisticated manners, and the genuine entertainment she derives from that which she is come professedly to be diverted by ; but then the more's the pity, for it will not last long thus."

" Do not forbode evil," replied Lord Rainham, who was in one of his best *couleur de rose* humours ; " remember there were, and are, among the *précieuses ridicules*, depuis tout les temps, des Mesdames de Sévigné et de Connell, and I

forget all their names, who retained their own innocent individuality, and their natural grace of mind, amid the most decided affectation and the most ridiculous pretensions."

"Yes, but they were exceptions to general rules ; and I do not augur so well of that one," still meaning Lady Glenmore, "under the care of that *Alcoviste*," alluding to Mr. Leslie Winyard.

"Is not that Lady Tilney sitting alone in her box?" asked Lord Rainham : "I must go make my obeisance, as in duty bound, or I may chance to be discarded ; and as we have no Molière to overturn our Hôtel de Rambouillet,* we had better keep its door open to us."

"Agreed," said Mr. Spencer Newcomb ; and, bowing to Lady Glenmore, they departed, leaving Mr. Leslie Winyard tenaciously keeping his conspicuous place, with cane at lip, and glove in hand, and eyes that were gathering the observations passed upon him with lynx-like sharpness, while they seemed half closed in listless or consequential apathy. In a few minutes after, the curtain dropped.

"O!" said Lady Glenmore, "I am sorry it is over ! I do not know when I have been so amused."

"I, too, am sorry it is over ; but *amused* is not exactly the explanation I should give of the *cause of my regret* ;" and he endeavoured that his eyes should explain what he *did* mean.

"No!" said Lady Glenmore, with perfect *naïveté* ; "then perhaps you have seen the play often before, and have been looking at the company, not at the stage?"

"Did you ever play at the game called *Magical Music*?" asked Mr. Leslie Winyard ; "and if so, and that I were the performer on the instrument, I should now touch it *forte fortissime*, for you are very near guessing the truth."

"I do not understand you," said Lady Glenmore, still unconscious of his drift, and her attention caught by some one who was entering, and causing a considerable stir. She hoped it was Lord Glenmore, which made her ask suddenly what o'clock it was. "I am sure," she added, "it must be very late, and I fear Lady Tenderden is not coming ; and Glenmore, too, said he would come ; but I begin to be afraid they *neither* of them will ;" and her countenance changed, and another spirit than that of girlish amusement took possession of her, and she became silent, overcast, and disquieted.

* Vide Molière's Preface to *Les Précieuses Ridicules*.

"Were they to come *together*?" asked Mr. Leslie Winyard, insidiously laying a peculiar emphasis on the last word.

"Oh no!—that is to say, not that I know of. Lady Tenderden did not tell me so." Mr. Leslie Winyard half smiled, and then, as if checking himself, he rejoined, carelessly, "Oh! you know these diplomats are the most slippery fellows imaginable; that is their trade: they are so taken up with the affairs of the nation, they forget all other affairs. But it is odd that Lady Tenderden also should have forgotten her engagement to you."

Lady Glenmore made no reply, but she became more and more uneasy: her colour went and came "like colours o'er the morning skies." She looked anxiously around, and started at every step that seemed to pass the door of her box, but yet, remembering certain lessons she had received, she contrived to keep under her uneasiness.

"Is there any thing I can do?" said Mr. Leslie Winyard; with an air of interest and concern. "I am afraid you are not well. Would you like to go home? I dare say my carriage is at the door if yours is not arrived, and that you would do me the honour to accept it."

"Oh, no!" she replied; "I am equally obliged to you, but I shall await the end of the performance."

Mr. Leslie Winyard now thought it was necessary to use all his art, to draw off her attention from the subject that engrossed it, and, if possible, fix it on himself.

"I am not apt," he said, "to be often in good-humour with myself; in truth, I have not much reason; but I am half inclined to suppose there must be some redeeming clause in my composition, for I have frequently observed that, after an hour or two of this sort of thing, you grow restless and weary, and I declare I always feel the same. I plume myself mightily in having discovered this similarity between us."

"Pardon me, you are quite mistaken. I am often exceedingly well diverted in public; and when Lord Glenmore is with me," and she blushed, as if she had said something she ought not, "I am generally well pleased to stay late, for I am never sleepy."

Mr. Leslie Winyard thought that it was more troublesome to counteract nature by art, than overcome art itself by art, as he replied,

"Oh! certainly, I understand that; but what I meant to say was, that it is not these scenes which afford one any real happiness; it is the society of a few friends, a selection of persons who suit each other, and who like the same things, and who are occupied in the same interests. For instance, how very much more enchanting it is to be singing a duet with you, than sitting at an Opera, hearing the artificial execution of those who sing by profession! for surely the true intention of music is, that it should express our own feelings, and transport us into a sort of half-beatific state, such as that expressed by your '*Sempre più t'amo.*'"

All this sentimental jargon, so different from the real nature of the speaker, was accompanied by those glances of admiration which spoke a much plainer language than even his words; but though the innocent Lady Glenmore was as yet unaware of their tendency, and did not see through the artificial refinement which Mr. Leslie Winyard thought it worth his while to assume, in order to induce her to listen to him at all, there was, nevertheless, a secret sense of genuine purity in her heart, which made her dislike the license of his gaze; and she answered, fixing her eyes on him with all the composure of perfect innocence, "It is very delightful to me to go to the Opera; and the perfect finish of the singing of professional people teaches me to improve my own. I am much obliged to you for the compliment; but I assure you, if you only heard me sing with my master, you would acknowledge that it is quite a different thing from what it is when I sing with you, for I was always afraid of putting you out, and that spoiled the little power I have."

This speech certainly did *put him out*, and in his heart Mr. Leslie Winyard cursed what he called her *naiaserie*: but he determined that, sooner or later, he would be revenged. Concealing, however, his mortification, he replied, "You were too good to consider me in any way; but I am sure nothing that you could do would ever give me a feeling of displeasure, whatever it might do of regret." He modified the expression of his eyes as well as those of his words, and he entered with her into a long comparison of the charms of Paris and London in their respective societies and manners, which engaged her attention; and she listened with great complacency for some time, during which he had continued to move his chair nearer and nearer her own, and to

appear to the public to be deeply engaged in the most interesting conversation, while, at the same time, he succeeded in allaying any discomfort she might have felt at his own too-marked admiration, previously shown, by turning her attention into a totally different channel, and determining to reserve a more open avowal of his sentiments for a more favourable and distant period, when suddenly the box door opened. Lady Glenmore started forward with an exclamation of surprise and pleasure, supposing it to be her husband ; but in this she was mistaken, for Lady Tenderden entered alone.

"I beg your pardon, my *dear lady*, for being so late," said the latter ; "but you know how impossible it is to get away in any time from a dinner party"—[the *impossibilities* of a fine lady are to be understood with certain modifications and meanings which do not belong to the literal signification of the word]—"and I regret being detained on all accounts ;" Lady Tenderden went on to say, "first, because I have lost your society ; then, for the sake of de play, which of all things I wanted to have seen : but you have been amused, I hope ?"

"Oh, exceedingly !" replied Lady Glenmore ; and then her countenance was overcast again at her husband's absence, and she sighed heavily, so that Lady Tenderden hardly knew what to think, and for a moment began to suppose that she had arrived inopportunely, and disturbed a *tete-à-tete* ; but then, again, remembering the character of Lady Glenmore, she only turned to Mr. Leslie Winyard, and whispered, in allusion to a circumstance connected with the *Precieuses Ridicules*, "I am sure you have been well entertained, although you have only been studying *la carte du tendre*." Lady Glenmore was too much absorbed in her disappointment, to pay any attention to their conversation ; and when she roused herself from her reverie, she longed to ask Lady Tenderden if she knew any thing of the House and whether it had broken up or not ; but she feared to incur her ridicule. Other men came into the box to pay their court to Lady Tenderden : and Mr. Leslie Winyard contrived, in the general mode that took place, to secure the chair immediately behind Lady Glenmore's, and endeavoured to regain her ear ; but her mind was quite abstracted, and herself totally uninterested in all that was passing ; so he

leaned back in his chair, and affected to be absent also, that he might appear to others to be occupied sympathetically with herself.

At length, Lady Glenmore could restrain her inquietude no longer ; and turning suddenly round, she said, "I wonder what can detain Lord Glenmore ! he promised to join me here." The different persons looked at each other and smiled significantly ; some in pity, some in derision, all in contempt.

"Oh you know, my dear," replied Lady Tenderden, "dese conjugal appointments are *sense* to be broken ; dey are de pie-crusts of life." Every body laughed, and poor Lady Glenmore coloured, as she felt a sort of indignation rise in her heart against the whole scene and the actors therein.

"But make yourself quite easy," Lady Tenderden added, in a sort of childish voice, "dere is no danger for Lord Glenmore ; I will be answerable for his safety."

Mr. Leslie Winyard affected to feel for Lady Glenmore, and to disapprove of this joke ; and turning to her, he said in his most *doucereux* tone, "You may depend upon it, a very long debate has taken place, and engages Lord Glenmore's absence from hence *necessarily*. It was always expected that the House would sit very late to-night : what else could keep him away from *you*?" he whispered, with an expression that was intended should sooth her ; and it did sooth her, and she felt grateful, and rewarded him by one of her sweetest smiles, saying,

"I conclude you are right." It was not long, however, before Lord Boileau came into her box.

"Boileau, are you come from the House?" said Mr. Leslie Winyard.

"No," he replied ; "the House was adjourned very early on account of the ex-minister's illness, whose explanation was looked for."

Lady Glenmore heard this circumstance with a beating heart ; and looking reproachfully at Mr. Leslie Winyard, she said, "You see you were mistaken ; why did you deceive me?"

He affected, for a moment, to be overcome with disappointment and chagrin, and then said, in a low voice, "Oh, be not uneasy ; there are so many things may have de-

tained a man in his station. Why do you suffer yourself to be thus wretched ! Would to Heaven he knew ! If he did but know, surely, surely he would be here. But how people mistake their own happiness ! Were I in his place—”

“ You would be where he is,” said Lady Glenmore, with composure.

“ Doubtless,” rejoined Mr. Leslie Winyard, with great presence of mind, “ for we cannot change natures with any one ; nor indeed do we ever wish it.” And then he relapsed into silence.

Although Lady Glenmore felt piqued and mortified at her husband’s having broken his promise to her, she could not bear that any one else should cast the least blame upon him ; and she dismissed her chagrin, and forced herself to talk gayly, as though her heart was light.

Mr. Leslie Winyard, apparently yielding to an irresistible impulse of admiration, once, and once only, whispered to her, “ Admirable creature ! it is only I that see through this disguise, and honour you for the sacrifice you are making of your feelings, considering the motives by which you are actuated.”

She turned this speech off as a joke ; but there was something in it which, though it pained, yet pleased her. How difficult it is for the purest natures not to lean to self-approbation when it comes in the soft breath of praise ! Nevertheless, the minutes seemed hours to her till the curtain dropped, and she arose quickly to depart.

“ Where are you going, *ma chère dame* ? ” said Lady Tenderden. “ Positively you must come with me. I have a *petit souper* on purpose for you ; and as Lord Glenmore knows of old that it is my custom to have this always after de play, having been prevented from joining us here, he will not fail to come to my house, and we shall find him waiting for us.”

“ Do you really think so ? ” asked Lady Glenmore, hesitatingly.

“ Yes, to be sure I do ; at all events, you can but come and try ; it will be always time enough to go home afterward.” These persuasions, adroitly pressed, won upon Lady Glenmore’s easy credulity, and she suffered herself to be handed down stairs, and got into Lady Tenderden’s carriage.

" You look quite divinely to-night," said Lady Tenderden to her as they drove along—" positively *ravissante*; *vous ferez fureur, je l'avois toujours predit*. Even when you had dat horrible English *modiste* to dress you, you were always lovely ; but now—now that you have de *vraie tournure*, and dat *le coupe de vos cheveux*, and de plait of your petticoat is *d'après le dernier goût*, depend upon it, all de hearts will fly to you."

Lady Glenmore laughed outright, it might be a little maliciously ; for she knew that no scissors, however classical in the estimation of her companion, had touched the luxuriance of her beautiful hair, or any body but her old English maid fashioned her petticoat ; but she enjoyed the mistake, and only thought, " This it is to be a minister's wife ! "

When arrived at Lady Tenderden's house, every thing was prepared for the reception of the *petit soupèr*, that is to say, about twenty people of the *elite* ; and the rooms were lit only to that precise degree of brilliancy which is best expressed by a *jour tendre* ; but there was no *Lord Glenmore*.

Some of the gentlemen loitered round the instrument, touching the notes, and humming some fashionable airs.—" Apropos," said Lady Tenderden, " nobody sings like Lady Glenmore, and Mr. Leslie Winyard will accompany her in a duet."

" Pardon me," said the latter, " I sing so ill, I should only *put Lady Glenmore out*," and he looked at her significantly ; " besides, joking apart, I have such a cold it is impossible I could utter a sound. But perhaps Lady Glenmore may be prevailed upon to favour us with an air, which will come doubly recommended when not marred by such an ignoramus as myself. Here are all sorts of beautiful things lying about ;" and he turned over the music. " Not only all the modern, but all the half-antiquated compositions. Above all, here is my old admiration ; and it has this advantage over many of its contemporaries, it has *echappé belle*, and it is not hackneyed, for this cogent reason, that hardly any body can sing it. I mean Haydn's *Ariana à Naxos*."

" Oh, charming ! " echoed one or two *real* amateurs ; " do, Lady Glenmore, do let us prevail with you to grant us the favour."

" Come," joined Lady Tenderden's voice with the rest, " I am sure you will not have ended before *Teseo* will have

arrived." Lady Glenmore was prevailed on to comply ; and though she began unwillingly, it was a composition so much in unison with her actual feelings, that unconsciously she became identified with its expression ; and she sang with such impassioned tenderness, and looked so much the Ariana that she sang, that all the men were in unfeigned raptures, and Lady Tenderden sat biting her lips in despite for having pressed her to the trial of her skill. Once or twice Lady Glenmore paused, when there was a change in the movement, and half rose, saying, " This is too long, you will be tired ;"—but she permitted a *douce violence*, and, reseating herself, finished the whole *scena*. However delightful her performance, and however delighted her audience might be, the odour of the delicate viands that now awaited them made a powerful diversion in favour of the latter ; and with *empressement*, while murmurs of applause were still on the lips of many of her auditors, they hastened to arrange themselves at the table.

The Comtesse Leinsengen, who was of course of the party, observed to Lord Baskerville, as he placed himself by her, " I am quite glad to put de taste of dat horrid dull *Teseo* out of my mouth. How people can be so *baroque* as to choose such long old-fashioned things, good for nothing but your German professors!"

Lady Tenderden said, " *Avouez, moi aussi, qu'une romance ou barcarolle vaut bien mieux.*"

" After all," said Lady Baskerville, " music is a good thing, but supper is a better." And now came the general clatter of tongues and knives and forks, sweeter than all the harmony of the spheres.

" I have made a vow," said Mr. Leslie Winyard to Lady Glenmore ; " guess what it is."

" No, tell me ; for I never guessed any thing in my life."

" Why, never again to sing with you, even should you deign to ask me, for I am quite convinced of the truth of your hint, that I only mar the perfection of your song ; and besides, the true way to feel *with you*, is to see *you feel*, unoccupied by any thought of one's own." Then, as if he avoided dwelling on the theme of his admiration, he talked gayly, and glanced at various topics with that agreeable lightness of manner which scarcely touches what it lights on, and alternately made her laugh and nearly cry, till her

spirits go into that state of excitement which obscures reason, and leaves the mind in some degree open to impressions that, at soberer and more reflective times, it would cast off as not analogous to its healthful state.

It was at a very late hour that this party broke up. Day was breaking, and with its clear pale light shaming their orgies, before Lady Glenmore was actually on her way down stairs to depart; but suddenly the morning was overcast with one of those thunder-storms not unusual at the season, and torrents of rain burst from the clouds. A heavy thunder-clap, that made the very houses rattle again, broke over the spot where she stood: for an instant she paused, appalled, while the company were rushing up and down past her, and snatching their various coverings, to shield them as they flew to their carriages.

"You are not afraid?" said Mr. Leslie Winyard, gently pressing the arm that rested upon his.

"No, not afraid," she answered; but her countenance was very serious, and something seemed to reproach her for being in such a scene at such an hour without any natural protector. She moved on, however, to her carriage: it was the last at the door. "How do you go home?" she said to Mr. Leslie Winyard.

"Oh! any how," he answered; and he looked around. "I see my people have thought it wise to avoid the storm, and left me to take care of myself."

"Can I not set you down?" she asked, from an innocent impulse of good-nature; and again a still louder clap of thunder rebounded over their heads, and it was with difficulty the coachman held his horses, as they reared and plunged violently.

"If you will be so very gracious," he answered, stepping in after her; and at the same time the carriage door was shut, the footman leaped up behind, and off the horses flew to — street.

"I am quite shocked," he said, "to take you out of your way; but really I think it was not quite safe, with these young horses, to let you go home alone, and unattended by any protector, in the midst of this terrific storm."

"Oh! as to that, I am sure Lord Glenmore would never let me have horses that were not to be depended upon."

"Will that tiresome name," thought Mr. Leslie Winyard,

“ never be out of her mouth ?” while he replied at the same time, “ Doubtless he would have *that* care ; for who would not be happy to have such a precious charge as your safety delegated to him ?”

“ I am very tired,” said Lady Glenmore, yawning ; “ I wonder what made me stay so late ; but I will never do so again.”

“ I fear, indeed,” he answered, “ that this, to me, most fortunate moment will never return, and that I may never again be able to feel that I am of the least use to you.” At length they arrived at Mr. Leslie Winyard’s door. He reiterated his thanks, took his leave, waited at the threshold till he saw her carriage depart, and Lady Glenmore proceeded home.

No sooner was Lady Glenmore alone, than she began to reflect on the unsatisfactory way in which she had passed the night. She felt sorry that she had been prevailed upon to go to the supper, or, having gone, that she had staid so long ; and, last of all, she regretted having set Mr. Leslie Winyard down in her carriage. With these excited feverish feelings, she arrived at her own door.

As soon as she began to undress, she learned from her maid that Lord Glenmore had come home early, had waited till one o’clock for her ladyship, and then gone to bed. “ Dear, how provoking !” she said, tearing off the ornaments she wore ; “ what could possess me to remain out so late !— How sorry I am !” and all the while she was demurring in her own mind whether she should tell her husband that she had set down Mr. Leslie Winyard, or pass the affair over in silence. “ He may be angry ; and I meant no harm ; and I cannot bear to see him displeased. Why should I tell him ? a thing, in fact, of such common occurrence, and, in itself, so perfectly innocent.” Thus, instead of going to peaceful rest, did a feverish inquietude take possession of her mind ; for the first step of a married woman from the high road of unquestioned purity is doing any thing, however trivial in itself, of which, having done it, she feels she would rather not tell her husband.

CHAPTER VII.

CROSS PURPOSES.

As Lord Albert ascended to the drawing-room, followed by Mr. George Foley, whom he had so inopportune met at Lady Dunmelraise's door, he felt his heart beat quick within his breast (notwithstanding the chilling reserve with which a cold indignation steeled it), on the sudden return of those jealous suspicions which blazed forth afresh on finding the object of them on the very threshold of Lady Adeline's presence at the same moment with himself.

Lord Albert was uncertain whether he should see Lady Adeline, or only be admitted to Lady Dunmelraise. The former, however, had so far regained an outward composure, that she had determined, should Lord Albert call, to get over the pain of their first interview, and drink the very dregs of her mortification at once. "I cannot suffer more," she said, "under any circumstances; and in the strength of this anguish I may be better able to endure, and receive it with becoming dignity than at an after-time, when my treacherous heart may again yield to delusive hopes."

Lady Adeline's mind, however, during the few hours which had elapsed since Lady Dunmelraise had spoken to her, had profited by her mother's kind and salutary counsel, and had, besides, found strength in that true spirit of resignation which bows to every event, with a perfect conviction that every thing which concerns us is under the guidance of a merciful Power who directs all things for our ultimate happiness; and she acknowledged, with a feeling even of thankfulness, that, painful as the trial was, it might have been far more painful under circumstances which must have rendered it of a deeper and more irremediable nature. But after all that poor *human* nature can do, the sense of sorrow for a time overpowers all others; and when Lady Adeline heard Lord Albert's well-known step, she would have fled his presence in despite of all her previous resolves, had she not felt rooted to the spot.

It was a relief, therefore, to her, when he was announced, to see Mr. Foley enter with him. Lady Dunmelraise was not in the room ; and it was perhaps as well that Adeline had no conscious witness of what was passing in her breast at the moment, as it enabled her to bear herself with more apparent ease of manner, than if any person acquainted with her heart's secret had beheld the meeting. She received Lord Albert's extended hand, but there was a mutual and chilling coldness in the touch, too unlike the feeling which usually accompanied the action, for them not both to be aware of the difference of this from any former greetings ; and each ascribed to the other the cause of this sad change.

Lord Albert was looking pale and harassed, but he was perfectly calm, and inquired, with that steady voice which a sense of deep injury conveys at the moment, after Lady Adeline's health, while he expressed his concern at the indisposition under which she seemed to have suffered so much the preceding evening. Her reply was short (for she did not dare to trust herself with any allusion to the cause of her illness), and she thanked him in as natural a manner as she could assume ; but her lip was blanched and quivered, and a tear was almost glistening in her eye. To any one who knew what was really passing in her heart, she would have appeared to have been saying to herself, " Is it possible this is Albert ? my Albert ?" But turning the conversation to some indifferent subject, she addressed herself with a semblance of vivacity to Mr. Foley ; that false vivacity to which the suffering heart, when taking refuge from the moment's pressure, resorts, in order to conceal its true feelings. Unfortunately, Lord Albert was himself too much blinded by his own at the time, to see through the specious disguise she assumed ; and with the perversity of jealous love, he put a false construction on her every word and whole demeanour, and thought he beheld in both the full confirmation of his suspicions.

Under this false view, Lord Albert turned with visible indignation away, as if to avoid the pain which Lady Adeline's behaviour inspired ; and he seemed to be intently admiring the pictures which hung on the walls, and which he knew by heart : but as his eye wandered over them, in fact, unconsciously, it rested on a portrait of himself,—the same which, when awaiting Lady Adeline's arrival in Lon-

don with such lively impatience, he had then missed from its usual station. How a trifling circumstance has power to double pain or pleasure, when it comes thus laden with past and present allusion to the interests of the heart! The idea at that time of its being her companion was joy to his spirit. With what very different feelings did he regard it *now!* The whole of his late hopes seemed to him a mockery, and his heart sickened at the thought as he again turned from the contemplation and threw himself into a chair.

There was a soul-searching glance of tender reproach in the look which he cast upon Lady Adeline. She coloured deeply, and was so intensely affected, that it was with difficulty she could support herself. Had there been no witness of their emotion, that moment would have brought them to a mutual conviction of their true sentiments for each other; but as it was, Lady Adeline strove to hide her feelings by turning her countenance away from him, and talking with more earnestness in a low, quick voice to Mr. Foley. Lord Albert rose, paced the room hurriedly, and was on the point of rushing away, when at that moment Lady Dunmelraise entered the apartment. At sight of her Lord Albert recovered his self-possession. He approached Lady Dunmelraise with composure, though with rather more of formal dignity in his manner than he was accustomed to show towards one whom he knew so well, and whom he had so long considered almost as a mother. There was a similar restraint on her part; and to his measured expressions of regret on the subject of Lady Adeline's sudden illness the preceding evening, she replied coldly and briefly, and then passed on to indifferent subjects, in which all present took their share. Lord Albert, however, rarely addressed himself to Lady Adeline or Mr. Foley, but seemed pointedly to confine his conversation to Lady Dunmelraise; while Lady Adeline, on her part, fearing to lift her eyes to him, or trust her voice with the most trivial expression immediately directed to him, continued to talk to Mr. Foley, though in so unconnected and absent a manner, that could he have overheard what she said, something like the truth must have been forced upon his mind.

After remaining a short half hour, which appeared to the parties most interested like half a century, Lady Dunmelraise, wishing to act on the principle she had explained to her daughter, of showing no very marked difference towards

Lord Albert, said, "Adeline will not venture out this evening for fear of a return of her headache. Perhaps, Lord Albert, if you are not engaged, you will dine and pass a quiet evening with us?" It is difficult to say how far Lord Albert, whose heart was ever alive to the slightest kindness, would have rejoiced to accept this offer, and grasp at the cherished idea that his society was still wished for, had not Lady Dunmelraise, in the same breath, turned to Mr. Foley, saying :

"George, will you not be of the party, and dine here too?" There was a momentary cloud passed over Lord Albert's brow, and Mr. Foley had accepted the invitation before he could reply. At length, after a painful pause, Lord Albert said :

"I should be happy, Lady Dunmelraise," and he spoke rather pointedly, "to avail myself of the wish you have expressed to see me, but your invitation reminds me that I have neglected to announce an event with which, perhaps, you are already acquainted, but which I conceive our intimacy demanded that I should make known to you myself, and which I came here this day for the express purpose of doing, or I should not have obtruded myself while I thought Lady Adeline's indisposition would probably have prevented you from receiving *any one*;" and he looked reproachfully at her as he said this. Lady Dunmelraise could not suppress a movement of astonishment. Adeline stopped for want of breath in her conversation with Mr. Foley, not knowing to what announcement Lord Albert alluded; and there was but one thought present to her fancy, one subject superseding all others in her mind; but she endeavoured to still her extreme agitation by saying to herself, "He never could have the refinement of cruelty to break off our engagement so publicly in the presence of an indifferent person." She awaited, nevertheless, in a state of terror that almost deprived her of a sense of hearing, what he would say.

After a considerable pause, or one which seemed such to her, Lord Albert spoke.

"I do not know whether you care about politics, Lady Dunmelraise?" At this word, politics, Adeline took courage.

"No," said Lady Dunmelraise, at once relieved and recovered from her surprise, for she also had thought his preface strangely portentous; "no, I do not," she said: "they

are not a woman's province, except in as far as regards the interests of those dear to her. But what of them?"

"Why, only that changes have taken place, and—"

"O yes," interrupted Lady Dunmelraise, as an increasing expression of sunshine broke over her countenance, "I have heard that various changes in the cabinet were intended, and that some of my friends were to be advantaged by the move."

"It is in confirmation of these reports that I came to inform you. I now myself fill a place in the administration: not that it can be of any consequence," he added, with some pique, and his lip trembled as he spoke; "but as you used kindly to express an interest in me in former times, I have thought it my duty that you should not learn that circumstance from any other than myself."

"Oh, my dear Lord Albert!" replied Lady Dunmelraise, "I am always happy to hear of any event which you deem conducive to your happiness: I hope that this, together with every future step in your life, will be so likewise; and I very sincerely give you joy of having obtained this object of your wishes. Adeline," turning to her daughter, "you too must express your congratulations to Lord Albert." This was almost too much for Lady Adeline's full heart, but without venturing to look directly at him, she said:

"Oh, I always do, mamma, wish him happy in every way." Lady Dunmelraise was aware of her daughter's emotion, and endeavoured to relieve her by addressing Lord Albert herself.

"These arrangements will not, however, I hope, prevent our seeing you at dinner to-day: you are not already so involved in the affairs of the nation as not to be able to spend a few hours with your friends?" Lady Adeline listened with the impatience of sickening hope for his reply; in vain, trying to sooth herself with the idea, that were he once more as much in their society as he used to be, he would love them as dearly as ever.

"I am grieved," he said, in answer to Lady Dunmelraise, "that it is quite out of my power, for I must be at the House almost immediately: a lengthened debate is expected on the subject of the late changes, and it is necessary I should be in my place."

"We are equally sorry with yourself, dear Lord Albert! but we hope another time to be more fortunate." Another

pause ensued. Lady Adeline's spirits again sank, but she continued her painful effort to rally, by talking more than ever to Mr. Foley; and Lord Albert, fancying that his presence was as irksome to her, as remaining longer was painful to himself, immediately took his leave, and left the house, mortified, miserable, and out of humour with himself and the whole world. He had really stated the fact, in pleading public business as the cause of his declining Lady Dunmelraise's invitation; and he had hardly time to reach the House before the commencement of the debate. On arriving there, and soon after he had taken his seat, it was announced that the member was seriously indisposed who had been expected to give one of those explanations which (such is the low ebb of character among British statesmen of the present day) every one who has held part in the government of the country has latterly thought it necessary to make in vindication of his public conduct. The question was consequently put off; and the House, after some business of little importance, and moving for new writs for those members who had accepted situations under government, adjourned at an early hour.

Lord Albert found himself thus relieved from the tie which had prevented his accepting Lady Dunmelraise's invitation; but it was no longer a question with him, as it would have been under other circumstances, of returning to South Audley-street, and stating what had occurred to set him at liberty, and requesting to avail himself of the opportunity to receive the pleasure of dining there. This would have been the act of a healthful mind, but under the mental disease which now tormented him, he turned with scorn from the idea; for he saw every thing in a distorted point of view, and ascribed to Lady Dunmelraise and her daughter the unworthy design of intending to provoke him to a relinquishment of his engagement with the latter, either because they did not choose to break with him themselves, or because they were not, perhaps, yet sure of Mr. Foley's intentions. Nothing but jealousy could have raised such a suspicion, so unworthy of them and of himself, respecting persons so long known, so much and justly esteemed, so dearly loved: but what chimera is too monstrous not to be born of that fiend which had taken possession of him? Under this species of aberration, for it can be called by no milder name, he threw

investment. Lady Delamere, my dear Lord d'Esterre, is, as you must know, the dullest, heaviest person I ever conversed with ; and allow me to tell you she can give herself sufficient airs of consequence. Nevertheless, I have known several instances in which she scrupled not to sacrifice persons that it suited her to put down. *Au reste*, I make no doubt she has all those good qualities which quizzes always teem with."

"Really," said Lord d'Esterre, "you astonish me ! I thought at least she had been good-natured."

"Your own good-nature does not allow you to see these things ; you have been used, you know, to consider all that party perfect ; but"—Lord Albert sighed deeply—"but you will find," continued Lady Hamlet Vernon, fully aware of the meaning of that emotion which had escaped him, and wishing to abstract his mind from the cause, by adverting to mere general topics, "you will find that the world is made up of classes. There are the Dutchess d'Hermanton, Lady Borrowdaile, Lady Aveling, form one class ; Lady Melcomb and her people form another ; your friends the Misses D. another ; and we, you know, form a class totally apart." Lord Albert listened to this kind of conversation sometimes with attention, sometimes abstractedly. His mind frequently adverted to totally different subjects ; but still he sat by Lady Hamlet Vernon's side the whole evening, or walked with her about the rooms.

In doing this, he was not aware of the occasion he gave for remark ; still less did he know that Lady Delamere had observed him in Lady Hamlet Vernon's box the preceding evening, and that that very circumstance had caused Lady Adeline's illness ; for if he had guessed this truth, different indeed would have been the result of his morning's interview with her. His appearance again, on the present evening, with Lady Hamlet Vernon, very naturally occasioned Lady Delamere's altered manner ; but he saw in her behaviour only the confirmation of an intention, on the part of Lady Dunmelraise and her daughter, and of the whole family, to break with him altogether. Neither did it occur to him, so prepossessed was he with the idea that Adeline was happier in Mr. Foley's society than in his own, that his excuse for not dining with Lady Dunmelraise must now appear to have been false, and framed expressly for the purpose of

fulfilling another engagement. How very different would have been his feelings, could he have known the anguish he inflicted on her who still loved him so truly ; and the additional wounds she would receive, when the circumstance of his seeming devotion to Lady Hamlet Vernon, during the whole of that evening, with the aggravation attending it of his supposed duplicity, should become known to her !

The fact was, although he was perfectly unconscious of it, that Lord Albert's attention to Lady Hamlet Vernon began to be considered in the light of a *liaison* by the world ; yet notwithstanding he was deemed too wise to risk matrimony, yet that was the last thing cared for. In society, arrangements which included *one* now generally included the other. The young men rejoiced in Lord Albert's being brought to their own level, as they thought ; and all who had any thing to hide in their own conduct felt less afraid of his superiority, when they saw him on the verge of an intrigue of the same nature as many of their own.

When, at length, Lord Albert d'Esterre returned home, the hum of voices, and the unmeaning admixture of dancing tunes, mingled together in utter discordance, still sounded in his ears, and he felt provoked at himself for having wasted many hours so unsatisfactorily. The tension of the mind, under the action of such feelings as those which agitated his breast, is never really relieved in similar scenes or by similar means ; and the false, feverish excitement produced by them, when it passes off, leaves the sufferer a thousand times more low and debilitated than before he had recourse to them. Lord Albert turned every way but the right way to find peace ; and when sleep did visit him, it was not the balmy friend which comes to the pillow of an approving conscience.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PRESENTATION AT COURT.

THE day at length arrived, to which so many had looked forward with lingering expectation, and which, to the young in general, was one of delightful anticipation. Among these, however, there was one who, though both young and beauteous, and likely, under other circumstances, to have enjoyed the idea of coming out into the dazzling scene of the world, remained unmoved by the general festivity, from a dread of the trial which the scene would probably bring to her feelings.

Lady Delamere had communicated to Lady Dunmelraise the circumstance of her having seen Lord Albert d'Esterre the preceding evening at Almack's, and of his being engrossed the whole time with Lady Hamlet Vernon ;—intelligence naturally productive of the most painful conclusions, and which, of course, received considerable aggravation in Lady Dunmelraise's mind from the excuses made by Lord Albert for not dining in South Audley-street on that day. She however felt that, although most painful, it was right to inform Adeline of this fresh instance of Lord Albert's unfeeling conduct, in order that she might, by so doing, lead her more and more to wean her affections from a person so unworthy as he now appeared to be, and help to destroy the remaining hopes which her daughter might otherwise retain of his returning affection.

Lady Adeline might well have thought that she had been prepared for the worst, and imagined that her cup of sorrow was filled to the brim ; but at this additional circumstance she felt, that the human heart is never so full of bitterness, but that there may be added some drops of gall. Her usual serenity, however, did not wholly forsake her ; but her first impulse was to entreat her mother to spare her the trial of attending the drawing-room.

"I wish," she said, "to be suffered to gain strength in retirement, and to seek for resignation, where you, my dearest

mamma, have ever taught me it can alone be found. Some day or other," though she did not believe what she was saying, "some day or other, I dare say, I shall be quite happy again; only *now*" — But at that moment the *quite happy* were words too much in contrast to the *quite wretched* at her heart, for her lips to be able to pronounce, and in a passion of tears her feelings found relief.

Lady Dunmelraise suffered them to flow unimpeded, and when she regained composure, said, "My dearest child, I insist on nothing to which you think yourself unable; but if you *can* make the exertion, do so, for my sake and your own. Reflect on the humbled feelings of your mother and of yourself, if Lord Albert should ever know into what a depth of sorrow and humiliation he has plunged us both."

"Mamma, mamma, he must know that; for does he not know, has he not seen, have I not shown him a thousand times how very dear he is to me? and, after all, what should I be, if I were not humiliated by his desertion?"

"Most true, dearest, in heart; but there is a prudence and decorum to be preserved in outward seeming; a respect due to ourselves, in not displaying our feelings to the unfeeling world, who only trample upon them with unheeding carelessness, and can never appreciate their depth or value. I can well understand, my dear child, that you will be making an heroic effort, by going into public under the present suffering state of your heart; but I do ask of you to make that effort: for I know, by experience, that there is much *real* power gained over ourselves by assuming its *appearance*."

This conversation ended by Lady Adeline's promising to do every thing her mother wished for her dear sake, whom she loved with more than filial affection; and, having once given this promise, she determined to fulfil it nobly. The satisfaction which follows any sacrifice of selfish feelings to the wishes of those whom it is our duty to please is never-failing, and, under every circumstance, affords a peace which can never be obtained by their indulgence to the dereliction of principle.

But, notwithstanding all Lady Adeline's amiable qualities, and all the estimable motives of her conduct, she could not avoid the natural pangs of sorrow and anxiety, which she, in common with every human being, is doomed to experience.

Come they must in some shape or other to all ; happiest are those who entertain them wisely. The whole of that day, an ebb and flow of dread and doubt passed over her in alternate tides of hope or despondence ;—of doubt, if Lord Albert would again call,—of dread, lest, if he did call, she should betray herself to him ; yet of hope, that he might put this trial to the test,—and of despondence, as the hours passed away and no Lord Albert appeared.

Fortunately, before we are tired of sorrow, sorrow tires us, so that wearied nature finds refuge in sleep despite of itself ; and this was the case of Lady Adeline, whose eyes, while yet full of tears, were closed in slumber : but it is the wakening again which is the trial ; then we seem to have derived fresh power to suffer, and the sad vision of grief is presented to us with renewed vitality. Such were Lady Adeline's feelings when her maid brought to her bedside the attire and the ornaments with which she was that day to be adorned, in order to enter upon a scene of pleasure which to most young hearts is attended with so many fascinations.

"Take them all away, Mourtray," she said, "take them all away ; it is not time to dress yet." And when the time did come, how many painful recollections marred every thought of pleasure ! Should she see Lord Albert in the crowd ? was the first question she asked herself ; and if she did see him, how would he behave to her ? how should she behave to him ? If he were unoccupied by any one at the moment, and apparently disengaged from any interesting conversation, she thought she could go through the scene ; but if he were talking to one whose name was now too well known to her, and too closely allied with the cause of her misery, she feared that neither the time nor the place would be sufficient restraints to sustain her under the trial.

"Every body," she said, looking at herself in the glass, "every body must read my story in my face. These red, red eyes, these swollen lips!"—And then she started up from her seat, and cried, "No, no, it must not be thus ! it is for my dearest mamma's sake I am going, and for her sake I will master my emotion ; I will endeavour to assume the tranquillity which she recommends." Repeated immersion of her face in cold water, and the being told that a short half hour only remained to the time appointed by Lady Delamere for her to be at her house, restored, in some

degree, the beauty of her complexion and the animation of her eyes ; while the bustle of necessary haste imparted that glow to her cheeks, which, though called forth by feverish and servid feelings, could still boast of being the delicate die of the rose. Her dress was in itself of the simplest and most unadorned fashion ; and when her jewels were presented to her by her attendant, most of which had been gifts from Lord Albert, she laid them all aside, and positively declined wearing any. The extreme luxuriance of her light, crimped hair, braided and curled in many a graceful fold, was her only decoration ; except that, as she passed a myrtle (the gift of Lord Albert also,) she hastily plucked a branch of it, and placed it with some care in her bosom. How deceitful is the human heart ! and, above all, how deceitful is the passion of love, which conceals itself under a thousand disguises ! The jewels were discarded, but the flower was chosen ; that flower, which, for its emblematic associations, was ten times dearer to her, and spoke a softer language than the diamonds' blaze or the rubies' die. Thus while denying, she cherished, love ! Oh, woman ! woman ! you alone know the meaning of the word, its thousand concealed tendernesses, its purity of essence, its endless springs of increase !

Lady Dunmelraise, when she took leave of her daughter, pressed her to her heart, and as she blessed her with an honest pride, thought there could not be a fairer, purer being, among the glittering throng. "Be of good cheer," she said, "love, and sustain your own dignity."

When Lady Adeline arrived at her aunt's house, she had to undergo the gaze of the persons assembled to look at the dress of those who were going to court, whose remarks, as she passed, kept alive that flutter of spirits which prevented her from indulging in softer feelings, and on the present occasion was of infinite use to her. On beholding her dress, her cousins exclaimed against the total absence of ornament or jewels ; but she said, it was of no consequence, nobody would look at her ; and when they all offered her various *aigrettes* and necklaces, she besought them not to insist on her wearing them.

"I have plenty at home," she said : but added, with a melancholy smile, "I have made a vow to wear none." Lady Delamere understood her, and thought her own love-

liness stood her in good stead of any extraneous aid. At all events, she conceived it was cruel to press her further ; and as time admitted of no delay, they went to their carriage through a line of persons drawn up on each side, all of whom bore testimony to Lady Adeline's beauty. They went slowly along in the splendid equipage, which, in the magnificence of old family state, attracted unusual attention ; till, coming to St. James's-street, they were obliged, by the string of carriages, to continue moving on at a foot's pace. And here again the gaping crowd made no inapt observations as the glittering throng passed in array before them.

One singular-looking, fat man actually followed the carriage a considerable way, evidently in admiration of Lady Adeline ; and observed to the person near him, loudly enough for her to hear what he said, "As for *she*, so plain-dressed like, she's the biggest beauty of 'em all," pointing at her ; "but she wears all her diamonds and pearls in her eyes and mouth." The people around roared and laughed, apparently in approbation, and even Adeline smiled and blushed. By the time they arrived at the entry of Buckingham House, her cheeks were glowing, and her eyes sparkling, with an excitement which was, she acknowledged to herself, salutary at the time, though factitious and evanescent. The brilliancy of the scene too, so new to her, was not without its effect. The rich liveries of the attendants, the military, the truly British grandeur of the yeomen of the guard, the blaze of beauty, of dress, and of smiles, struck Adeline with admiration and momentary pleasure ; and in her own natural way, she said to one of her cousins,

"This is a noble sight. I am glad I came. Mamma is always in the right." But then in another moment she sighed ; and remembering all the circumstances that had so recently passed, the whole moving mass of feathers, flowers, and jewels became one undistinguishable confusion, without power to charm or awaken her interest. But all this while, she was borne along on the stream of the crowd ; and she heard, amid the buzz of voices, her own name, and then the observation which followed it. Women always talk of the dress of those they wish to *denigré*, and of course Adeline's was commented upon, and found great fault with. "Quite improper, I declare !" said old Lady Honeyman to her distorted daughters, whose features, under the influence of the

dancing St. Vitus, seemed to redouble their activity in honour of the shaking brilliants with which they were covered ; " I declare it is quite improper to come to court as if one was in one's chemise ! perfectly shocking ! quite indecent ! Poor thing ! had she nobody belonging to her who could lend her a pair of earrings, at least ?" — " What a beautiful creature ! " cried another voice (a man's, of course) ; " did you ever see any thing like the harmony of her features and the shape of her ear ? it is quite classical ; and she has none of those horrid girandoles pendent to it to spoil its form."

" Who is she ?" " who is she ?" went round and round in audible whispers ; and the last speaker pressed onwards, somewhat careless of the convenience of his neighbours, on purpose to get another view of her.

" How people do squeeze ! " said the enraged Lady Honeyman ; " it is like a bear-garden. Elfrida, my love, take care of your diamond cestus ; Lauretta, do not lose your ruby *aigrette*. — There, sir, there ! — you have torn my Brussels lace lappet all to pieces with the hilt of your sword ! " — And at this appeal the gentleman looked down on the little yellow dwarf with infinite dismay and many apologies ; and stopping to disengage his sword from the ill-fated lappet, cast an evil eye upon the black Lauretta, who assisted to disengage the lappet, wishing her in the shrine of her namesake, where all her diamonds might receive that homage which he was only endeavouring to pay to the unadorned Adeline's genuine beauty.

At length, Lady Adeline and her party reached the room in which the sovereign stood ; and Lady Adeline found herself suddenly in an open space, from whence the monarch, and those persons attached to his household, could distinctly see every person separately who entered. Lady Adeline felt awed, for she had imbibed a respectful attachment to the person of her sovereign, and her young feelings were those of enthusiastic loyalty.

Lord Albert, who in his official situation had the private *entré*, had not yet seen Lady Adeline, and at the moment she appeared in the door-way, was talking to Prince Lutermann : when the latter, with his habitual admiration for every thing young and new, was so struck with her appearance, that he broke off his conversation, saying, " Who is

that very extraordinary beautiful girl now entering?" Lord Albert, whose back was towards her, turned suddenly round, and, on beholding her, was so overcome by a sudden revulsion of feeling, that he could not directly reply. He hesitated, his countenance changed, his lip quivered; and, after a considerable pause, he abruptly said, "Oh! that is Adeline." Prince Luttermanne looked astonished, saying at the same time, "Who the deuce is Adeline?" but Lord Albert had not waited to answer any further inquiries. He moved away round the back of the circle, to get a more distinct view of the object so unexpectedly presented to him;—an object still dearer to his heart than any other upon earth, and one whose presence, when, as thus, suddenly brought before him, was never-failing in overturning all the sophistry of art, and all the juggles and distortion of jealous passion. In the present instance, she stood before him as the personification of innocence and truth.

In the midst of splendour and of beauty, her beauty shone forth in its unadorned power, and in the freshness of its morning purity, pre-eminently bright in perfect simplicity. She was not unconscious of the admiration she excited; but that very consciousness added to her charms: it deepened the roseate colour of her cheek, gave additional lustre to the tremulous sparkle of her eye, and threw over her whole air and person that veil of diffidence which imparts grace to every movement and interest to every glance. Lord Albert gazed on her with intense admiration. He thought of the time when he had looked forward to the present epoch in Lady Adeline's existence, as to one in which he should be a partaker in her triumph, and gather up the suffrages paid to her beauty as though they were so many offerings bestowed to gratify his own feelings and confirm the superiority of his own choice;—but, as it was, how differently did he feel!

She was now nothing to him, he was nothing to her; she cared not for his approbation or his censure; she knew not whether he was to be present at this her first *début* in the world, or not: and then, again, a change came over his fluctuating feelings, and recalling to mind the thousand instances in which she had proved her attachment to him, the truth for a moment flashed before his fancy, and in despite of all that had lately occurred, he believed himself dear to her. How an enamoured imagination catches at trifles,

and is the sport of hope or fear ! Lord Albert for a moment felt the full glow of tenderness and trust float over his whole being, like a refreshing dew over a thirsty land ; and as he moved along, unheeding the gay crowd that flitted past him, he sought only for the one object whom he desired to behold. He now caught a glimpse of her, and then lost it again, obscured by some feathered headdress, or some uninteresting intervening object ; but, at length, he reached a spot from whence he had a full view of her, as she half knelt to kiss the sovereign's hand, and was raised again by the most graceful action ; and Lord Albert had the gratification of thinking he saw an expression of gracious admiration in the sovereign, as he turned to one of the lords in waiting, evidently making some remark on Lady Adeline.

But all this while Lord Albert failed in catching her eye ; and he now retraced his steps as hastily as the crowd would allow, in order to reach the door by which Lady Adeline must necessarily go out. In this attempt, however, he was disappointed, for such was the pressure and hurry of the officers to prevent a crowd in the presence-chamber, and Lady Adeline was so rapidly hurried on, that she was quickly lost to Lord Albert's view by the intervening multitude. He had not even the gratification of once catching her eye as she passed ; for, added to the celerity with which she was compelled to move on after her presentation, she felt, as was natural to one so young, a degree of mingled flurry and awe, which kept her eyes fixed on the ground.

This, however, did not suggest itself to Lord Albert, and he questioned himself to ascertain whether her apparent unconsciousness of his presence was real or feigned. Notwithstanding this doubt, Lord Albert continued his pursuit of her, and was so long unsuccessful, that he began to think she must have left the Court. As he made his way with difficulty through the crowd, he heard her name frequently mentioned, and always accompanied with praises of her beauty. As expressions of this kind fell on his ear, he could not forbear feeling that it was profanation for any one to dare to speak of Lady Adeline but himself : so unjust and so monopolizing is the spirit of jealous love.

At length, Lord Albert, almost despairing of meeting with Lady Adeline by moving about, determined to fix himself at the outward door of the saloon, where he knew that

she must pass in going away. Here he resolved to await the departure of the whole crowd, and, at least, ascertain the fact ; but he had only taken this position a very short time, when Lady Hamlet Vernon appeared on the stairs, and nodding to Lord Albert as she descended into the great hall, approached, and took the seat which of course he relinquished to her. However much he had, of late, sought her society, and felt entangled by the spell which she knew so well to cast over him, there existed, at the present moment, a disposition to emancipate himself from the thralldom, and he felt her presence to be an intrusion. In proportion as these feelings increased, so did the restraint in his manner and conversation become more evident ; and Lady Hamlet Vernon was much too penetrating, not to be aware that some strong interest directed his attention from her.

He had remained some time in this embarrassed situation, which a mutual consciousness rendered every moment more painful. Answering Lady Hamlet Vernon's questions mechanically with his lips, while his thoughts and eyes were wandering in quest of the only object he wished to see, he suddenly beheld Lady Adeline, with Lady Delamere and her cousins, at the bottom of the staircase, and was on the point of abruptly leaving Lady Hamlet Vernon's side, and darting towards her, when Lady Adeline's eyes were for a moment directed to him. A mutual glance was interchanged, as brief as it was powerful, and he felt that at least she had seen, had recognised him, and in that single glance their souls had met and felt together ; but her eyes quickly dropped, she spoke hastily to Lady Delamere, and they mutually turned, as if to reascend the staircase. This movement, however, although its intention was evident, was so in contradiction with Lady Adeline's glance of recognition, that it did not deter Lord Albert from ardently wishing to speak to Lady Adeline ; and he was hastening away, in despite of Lady Hamlet Vernon's endeavours to arrest his attention, to join the former, when a cry of " Throw open the window ! water ! she faints ! " struck his ear. The sound came from the opposite quarter in which he was going ; but when he perceived the bustle, and the crowd endeavouring to make way for some person who was ill, and whom they were trying to bring into a freer current of air, his first impulse was to stand aside also, and lend his assistance for

that purpose. In doing this, he soon recognised the lady who had fainted to be Lady Glenmore, borne in the arms of Mr. Leslie Winyard ; and then, with renewed interest, as the wife of his friend Lord Glenmore, he pressed forward, and succeeded in making a passage to the window, the sash of which he threw up, and partly aided in placing Lady Glenmore on a seat : he then hastened away for water and restoratives.

Every one was forward in tendering assistance to the minister's wife ; and while many officially stood around her, others, of better judgment and kinder intentions, went in search of Lord Glenmore.

"What a lucky fellow!" cried Lord Boileau, one of the idlers who was standing near ; "what a lucky fellow that Leslie Winyard is, to have the carrying of that beautiful creature in his arms!"

"Oh ! you know *c'est une affaire arrangée*," said Lord Gascoigne. "She never speaks to any one else now."

Lord Albert heard these remarks with indignation as he returned with water, and could not help casting a look at the speakers, that they well understood.

"Upon my word," observed Lord Boileau, "that man is quite insufferable. I thought he was improved since he lived among us ; but I suppose he looks forward to rival Leslie Winyard, and will not hear the lady's fame called in question on account of any one but himself."

"Bah!" replied Lord Gascoigne ; "Lady Hamlet Vernon will never suffer that."

"Is that really as people say?" asked Lord Boileau.

"Oh ! quite settled long ago," answered Lord Gascoigne ; "and as she is a *maitresse femme*, she will not allow him to forsake her quietly."

"How very beautiful, how very lovely she is, Boileau!" said Lord Baskerville, approaching at that moment ; "now that she can neither talk nor laugh, she is quite charming—hem ! I never knew before that she was handsome—hem ! She ought to do nothing but faint—hem !"

"Yes," they both replied, "she is very lovely indeed." "I rather envy Leslie Winyard," cried Lord Boileau : "that fellow has always been lucky. But have you seen Lady Adeline Seymour, *la nouveauté du jour*? Rather raw and unledged yet, but she will be a very fine creature a year or two hence."

"Don't you know her story?" whispered Lord Baskerville, approaching his mouth to the ear of Lord Boileau.

"No—yes—I did hear something of it. She is going to be married, isn't she?"

"She *was*," rejoined Lord Baskerville, looking very wise; "but, a-hem! that's all off now. I know all about it—hem! for *he* is so involved, hem! that marriage is impossible—hem! And really the poor girl has *échappé belle*, for I never knew such a puritanical affected—hem! I cannot conceive what the women see about him to endure him for a moment—hem!"

By this time the report of Lady Glenmore's having fainted spread through the rooms, and there were assembled around her Lady Tilney, Lady Ellersby, and the Comtesse Leinsengen.

"I do not wonder you were overcome, my dear Lady Glenmore; it was terribly hot," said Lady Tilney, in her most coaxing manner. "These vile drawing-rooms are quite enough to kill one. Such a heat, and such a crowd of Heaven knows whom! And then to see whom or what? for one never sees the ostensible object for whom one comes here. If it were not to oblige Lord Tilney, and because one must, I would never come to such a horrid place again. My dear Lady Glenmore, you who have suffered so much are, I am sure, out of all patience with the whole thing."

Lady Glenmore, who had by this time quite recovered, and who was placed very comfortably enjoying the fresh breeze that came to her unpolluted by the heat and breath of the crowd, as she sat close by the window, now resumed her accustomed smiling cheerfulness, and replied,

"Not at all, Lady Tilney; I assure you I have been much amused, and think it is a very splendid scene;—so much beauty, so much magnificence, that I was quite provoked at myself for being overcome, and unable to enjoy it; but I am perfectly well again *now*, and I hope another time to be more used to it."

"*Quelle niaiserie!*" whispered the Comtesse Leinsengen to Lord Baskerville. "She ought to go back to her nursery."

"Nothing is so tiresome," replied Lord Baskerville, "as low people who are always diverted. They must be false or fools, a-hem! after their first existence in the world—hem!"

our world I mean—hem! As to me, I don't care for any thing or any body, and am always bored to death here, a-hem! ar'n't you ?”

“*C'est selon,*” answered the Comtesse, in her most abrupt manner.

“Don't you know,” cried Lady De Chere, “that there are a certain number of people who live upon getting up scenes all their life ? they are alway either fainting, or crying, or haranguing.”

“It's very bad taste,” rejoined Lord Baskerville, “at all events—hem!” At this moment Lord Glenmore came up to his wife, betraying considerable agitation, and inquiring tenderly of Lady Glenmore how she felt, and speaking to her in a low voice of earnest solicitude ; to which she replied with answering affection.—Mr. Leslie Winyard moved away affecting more displeasure than he really felt.

“What a fuss Glenmore is in ! Vulgar !—hem ! I cannot conceive,” said Lord Baskerville, “why people should display their conjugal felicities to the world.”

“The old song, I think,” observed Lord Rainham, who was passing by, and overheard the remark, “gives good advice :—

‘ Ne cherchez pas la quintessence ;
Contentez-vous de l'apparence.
Qui veut trop voir, et trop savoir,
Trouve souvent plus qu'il ne pense.’

A polite inquiry, that did not enter into particulars, might perhaps have suited better the interests of all parties, than that apparently minute inspection of circumstances—eh ! Baskerville ?” with a sort of sneering smile—“don't you agree with me ?”

“Certainly, hem ! nothing is so mistaken, or argues such want of knowledge of the world, as to be *affaire* about any thing.”

“*To be,*” observed the Comtesse Leinsengen, “is one ting, to *seem to be* is another : in dat lies de *savoir vivre* or de no *savoir*. But I did not hear my carriage was up ?”

“Yes, Comtesse ; allow me to have the honour ;” and she accepted his offered arm and departed.

“*D'Esterre,*” said Lord Glenmore, “I leave you to take

care of Lady Glenmore, while I go in quest of our carriage ; your gallantry will, I am sure, accept the charge."

Lord Albert felt really flattered, and would at any other time have been happy to have such a post assigned to him, had it not been that he feared in consequence to lose seeing Lady Adeline. This thought gave his countenance an anxious serious air, which the men around did not fail to comment upon. But Mr. Leslie Winyard could scarcely conceal his ill-humour. The husband to cross him was bad enough, but another man, and that man Lord Albert d'Esterre, whom of all others he most disliked, was gall and bitterness to him. He approached Lady Glenmore, however, casting a look of insolence towards Lord Albert ; but the serious, preoccupied demeanour of the latter prevented his even observing the impertinence intended for him.

Mr. Leslie Winyard was bent over Lady Glenmore, and whispered in her ear. She listened with rather more complacency than Lord Albert seemed to think was fitting, and she thanked Mr. Leslie Winyard for his care with somewhat more feeling than he thought the occasion merited ; but she spoke aloud, and seemed to avoid the whispered conversation which the other affected to hold.

Lord Albert, however, who was the last man in the world to play the mean part of a spy over the actions of any one, felt his situation sufficiently awkward ; and considering that his every wish was on the wing after Lady Adeline, it became every instant more painful. He almost determined on leaving Lady Glenmore ; but then he thought Lord Glenmore would naturally feel hurt at his doing so. While weighing this matter with himself, Lord Glenmore returned, announcing the carriage to be at hand.

" D'Esterre, have the goodness to give your arm to Lady Glenmore on one side, and I will take care of her on the other, and then we shall be able, Georgina, to take you through the crowd without your suffering any inconvenience." Mr. Leslie Winyard bit his lip with mortification, and Lord Boileau said to him, with some degree of sarcasm,

" Really, Winyard, I think you are ill used ; after your services, to see another preferred before you."

" Oh ! *c'est la fortune de la guerre*," he replied, with an air of affected triumph ; " but as for preference, *reste à savoir*."

"Upon my word, Winyard's coolness is admirable," said Lord Gascoigne, "and I would bet an even hundred that he is right. Georgina, as he calls her, I dare say, understands a thing or two by this time, and knows how to hoodwink Glenmore." No sooner had Lord Albert handed Lady Glenmore into her carriage, than he returned swiftly, with a faint, sickening hope that he might not yet be too late to catch at least one precious look more of Adeline; nor was he disappointed, for he met her suddenly, standing near the door with her party. Addressing Lady Delamere with an *empres-
sement* of manner, and an intonation of voice, that spoke the temper of his soul, his eyes fixed upon Lady Adeline's, he scarcely knew what it was he said to Lady Delamere, till the extreme coldness of the latter, and her marked asperity of reply, checked the flow of his feelings, and he remained mute and abashed, when the silver sound of Lady Adeline's voice, inquiring for Lady Glenmore, reanimated him.

"The heat was overpowering," she observed, "and she could not be surprised that any one had fainted: she herself had suffered from it."

Lord Albert made some answer, expressive of concern for her: and gazing at her with unrepressed tenderness, he remarked the myrtle sprig in her breast; for it was associated in his mind with some recollections that made it, in his estimation, an object of infinite interest. At that instant it dropped on the ground. He stooped to recover it hastily; and as he half tendered to restore it to her, said, "Its freshness was surprising, considering the atmosphere it had been in for so many hours; yet not so, neither," he added, "when I remember where it has been placed: but it is not worthy of such felicity. Allow me to retain it, for I, at least, can envy and appreciate its happy fate." A glow of lustrous joy illuminated Lady Adeline's countenance; and if before the agitation of doubt and sorrow had shook her frame, an emotion not less intense, though proceeding from feelings the very opposite, now affected her.

"Far as distress the soul can wound,
'Tis pain in each degree;
'Tis bliss but to a certain bound;
Beyond is agony."

Her emotion could not escape Lord Albert's observation,

nor could he mistake its cause. With all the warmth of renewed and genuine affection, he again whispered to her,

"Adeline, will you be at home to-night if I come?"

Before she could reply, Lady Delamere's carriage was called. She turned rather abruptly to Lady Adeline, saying, "Adeline, come; the carriage waits;" and at the same instant, Mr. Foley, who had been in quest of it, joined them, as though in much haste.

"If you delay an instant, Lady Delamere," he said, "your carriage must drive off, and then it is difficult to tell when you may get away."

"Adeline," cried Lady Delamere, speaking authoritatively, "take Mr. Foley's arm." And at the same time courtesying coldly to Lord Albert, she showed him his attendance was not desired, and hurried after her niece and daughters; for Lady Adeline, confused and agitated, had only time to cast a look at Lord Albert, and was in a manner obliged to suffer herself to be led away by Mr. Foley.

Lord Albert stood for a moment like a statue; the sprig of myrtle, however, was in his hand, or he might have fancied he had dreamed the scene, so quickly had it passed. "What can this mean?" he said to himself, lingering on the spot where Lady Adeline had parted from him, quite unconscious of the crowd that passed by him in all directions. But where is one more alone than in a crowd? His reverie, however, was speedily broken in upon by hearing Lady Hamlet Vernon's name loudly called; and the next instant, as she was passing, unattended, to go out, she said to him,

"Do, Lord Albert, be so obliging as to give me your arm." In common courtesy he complied; but it was mechanically, and like the action of one in a dream. "You had better let me set you down, Lord Albert, if your carriage is not up, or you will never get away." An anxious wish to leave a scene in which he had now no interest, induced him to avail himself of the proposal. He leaped in after her, and they drove rapidly away. He said something expressive of thanks to her, of the crowd, of the heat, of Lady Glenmore; and this brought them to Cleveland-row, when their progress was stopped, and the clatter of horses, and the crash of carriages, and the screams of women, and the oaths of servants, resounded in all directions. Lord Albert hastily looked out, and saw Lady Delamere's equipage, which had been forced

out of the line among other carriages, and, in order to disentangle itself, was backing so as to come immediately parallel with Lady Hamlet Vernon's. He was grateful to think it was not in any present danger at least ; but in lowering the glass and looking out to see what had occasioned the disturbance, he had forgotten and left the myrtle sprig on the seat of the carriage, and did not remark, in reseating himself, that Lady Hamlet Vernon had taken it up and was holding it in her hand, so absorbed was he in anxiety for Lady Adeline's possible danger.

Lady Delamere's carriage was by this time in contact with Lady Hamlet Vernon's. Lord Albert was just about to put his head again out of the window, to assure the former there was no danger, when he saw Lady Adeline lean back suddenly in the carriage, and at the same instant one of her cousins, as he thought, by her desire quickly drew up the window, evidently to prevent all communication. Lord Albert could not mistake this action. It perplexed and wholly overthrew all his presence of mind ; and under the painful pressure of contending feelings he made some brief excuse to Lady Hamlet Vernon, of endeavouring to see if the carriage could be extricated, and opening the door he darted out, without any thought but that of yielding to the impulse of his feelings, and proceeded home in a state of distraction.

CHAPTER IX.

INTRIGUE.

As soon as Lord Albert was alone, and could recall his scattered senses, he reviewed every look and gesture of Lady Adeline ; and notwithstanding all that passed at the drawing-room and subsequently, notwithstanding the marked coldness and disapprobation which her manner had of late implied, he yet thought that her real feelings were not those, at least, of indifference towards him ; and he resolved to

try the issue of calling in South Audley-street that evening, as he had proposed to her.

For this purpose, he got away early from a ceremonious dinner which he was obliged to attend, and which appeared to him to last longer than any dinner had ever done before : and with his heart and head full of Adeline, and of Adeline alone, he found himself once more in her presence. Lady Delamere and her daughters, and one or two others, were sitting around Lady Duaneraise's couch, amusing her with accounts of the drawing-room ; but Lady Adeline was at the piano-forte, and Mr. Foley sitting by her, with a certain indescribable air of being established in his place by right.

At one glance of his eye, Lord Albert took in the whole room on entering, together with the relative position of its occupants ; and his feelings underwent a sudden and painful revulsion. He advanced, however, towards Lady Dunmelraise, who extended her hand to him, but in a way that he could not mistake ; and her coldness struck an additional chill to his heart. From Lady Delamere and her daughters he met no kindlier greeting ; and he determined at once to try if Adeline's heart was equally shut against him. For this purpose he moved towards her ; and although she could not see him, her back being turned to that part of the room from whence he came, yet she heard his approaching foot-step, and trembled in every nerve.

Mr. Foley, who had followed Lady Hamlet Vernon's advice respecting his own conduct, and who lost no opportunity in acting in conformity to it, was now determined that he would not resign his seat or quit his station near Lady Adeline. The latter, on her part, had been too much agitated by her oyn feelings to see things in their true light ; and was glad of any person to talk to, in order to conceal her emotion. But no artificial means were sufficiently powerful to still the beatings of her heart ; and when Lord Albert inquired after her health, saying, he hoped she had not suffered from the morning's fatigue, she started at the sound of his voice, although she expected to hear it, and made some hurried reply, which he construed into a disdain of his inquiries.

Lord Albert, wretched and astonished, stood mute ; questioning within himself if this could really be the same Adeline whom he had a few hours ago seen with such a

different expression in her whole countenance and demeanour, as to make him doubt the evidence of his senses. He would at once have broken through the mystery, could he have obtained her ear for a moment; but the presence of Mr. Foley, who pertinaciously, and, as it appeared to Lord Albert, in defiance of him, kept his place, prevented all explanation. And then again returned those false conclusions which arose from jealous doubt; and he conceived that it would be unworthy of himself even to seek an explanation from one whose evident preference of another appeared to him so very decided.

In this dark spirit of jealous indigation, he turned away, and sank into gloomy silence. Could he have known what was passing in Lady Adeline's breast, he would have acknowledged the justice of her feelings; he would have seen that all which seemed coldness and indifference was only the result of a proper sense of what she owed herself; and that under that assumed demeanour lay hid the truest, warmest love. Strange as it may appear on a slight review of the matter (although it is the common infirmity of human nature never to see its own defects), he was not aware of the effect which his constant intercourse with Lady Hamlet Vernon produced on the minds of all those who witnessed his intimacy with her; and, perhaps, as matters now stood, even if he had been at one time inclined to own himself in the wrong, the still greater dereliction from all truth and delicacy, which he thought he discovered both in Lady Adeline and Lady Dummelraise, respecting their behaviour to him, completely exonerated him in his opinion, and he lost all sense of the evil of his own conduct in blaming theirs.

Little did Lord Albert dream (indeed, in the excitement of greater things, he had totally forgotten it) that the sprig of myrtle which Lady Adeline had given him that morning, and which had been apparently the medium of so much mutual tenderness, had been seen by her in Lady Hamlet Vernon's hand, when their carriages were entangled in coming from the drawing-room. It was this circumstance, combined with Lord Albert's being again in assiduous attendance on one whom she was now compelled to consider in the light of a rival, that had made Lady Adeline draw up the glass at the moment Lord Albert was about to speak to her, in order to escape witnessing so painful a truth. As

she threw herself back in the carriage, and reflected on the unworthiness of his conduct, she became the victim of the most agonizing feelings ; for what is so painful as the conviction of unworthiness in the object of our love ? and it was this conviction which had effected the alteration in her manner towards him, which he could not but observe from the first moment of his entering the room.

While she was actuated by these sentiments, Lord Albert, on his part, writhed under the idea that Mr. Foley was his favoured rival, and that he was only allowed to witness his triumph, in order that he might be provoked to become the party who should break off the engagement existing between him and Lady Adeline. But this he inwardly determined should never be the case. He endeavoured, therefore, at the present moment, to devour his chagrin, and force himself to converse on indifferent topics ; addressing himself, however, to Lady Dunmelraise, rather than to Lady Adeline. Among others, he made allusion to the *fête* which was to take place at Avington Park the day after the following, and expressed his regret that he had been unable to procure the tickets which he had hoped to have presented to herself and Lady Adeline ; " a circumstance," he added, " which I consider very unfair, since I was one of the original subscribers to this *fête* ; but the names of the parties to be inserted have been all chosen by ballot, and my single voice alone did not prevail in obtaining the insertion of those whom I wished to be on the list."

This was really the fact, however extraordinary it may appear. Lord Albert, with the other persons who formed the committee appointed to give and arrange this *fête*, had paid five hundred guineas each towards defraying the expense, but not one of them had the power of inviting any individual apart from the consent of the whole body ; and as Lady Dunmelraise and her daughter were not of that circle which Lady Tilney and her *coterie* considered to be *ton*, Lord Albert's wishes on this point, which were perfectly sincere, had been wholly unattended to. Under the circumstances, however, in which he stood in the opinion of all those who now heard him, the exclusiveness of this measure could not be comprehended or believed, and, in short, passed for a mere deception.

His excuse, consequently, was received with great cold-

ness by Lady Dunmelraise, who only replied, "That, as to herself, her going was quite out of the question; and as to her daughter," she added with emphasis, "I dare say Adeline has no wish to be there." Here the subject dropped; and Lord Albert, torn by a thousand contradictory feelings, could no longer continue to play so painful a part as that which he now saw devolved upon him. In this state of mind he quitted Lady Dunmelraise's house, having bade her a cold adieu. Little did he imagine it was for the last time.

If Lord Albert had exercised the power of sober reason, if the sorrow he felt had been free from all reproach of conscience, he would not have feared to look into his own breast, and would have sought counsel from that best adviser, his own mind, in the quiet of his chamber; "for a man's mind is wont to tell him more than seven watchmen that sit upon a high tower." But miserably he had suffered many entanglements to embarrass his steps, and direct them from the straight-forward path. The natural consequence of this was, that his mind had become a chaos, in which he distinguished nothing clearly; and in the bitterest moments of suffering, instead of coolly resorting to his understanding, as he once would have done, he now always sought to elude reflection by plunging into crowds. Whenever we dread to be left alone with our own thoughts, we are in peril. This melancholy change in Lord Albert's character was one which the alteration in his mode of life, and his associates, had in a short period of time effected.

Instead, therefore, of returning home when he left South Audley-street, Lord Albert drove to Lady Glenmore's, who was that night to receive the *coterie* of their peculiar circle for the first time at her own house. There had been no little arrangement on Lady Tilney's part, as well as on Lady Tenderden's, to give to Lady Glenmore's *soirée* its full effect in the annals of *ton*, by stamping it with that exclusive mark of self-asserted distinction, of which they considered themselves to be the sum and seal.

No pains had been spared by these ladies, therefore, to render this assemblage of persons select, according to their acceptation of the meaning of the word, and, *pour trancher le mot*, as they said, to exclude every one not on their own private lists, with the limited exception of those *diplomates*

and official persons whom Lord Glenmore's ministerial situation obliged them to permit Lady Glenmore to invite.

At Glenmore House there was of course assembled, on the present evening, the Tilneys, Leinsengens, Tenderdens, Boileaus, Gascoignes, De Cheres, and the rest of the *élite* who formed the *société choisie* of Lady Tilney; and as the latter looked around the apartments, and only saw there those whom in fact *she* had bidden, she was gratified with this fresh accession of arbitrary power, and considered it no small triumph thus to have set the seal of her supremacy over the yielding Lady Glenmore, who might, under other circumstances, if she had not been an ally, have proved a formidable enemy. As it was, Lady Tilney expressed the sense of her satisfaction by a thousand *cajoleries*, which one woman knows so well how to practise upon another when it suits her purpose. She praised Lady Glenmore's dress (that touchstone of female friendship), although she could not help saying apart to Lady Tenderden, that it was a pity Lady Glenmore still persisted in her *baroque* modes, which in fact were no modes at all, but contrivances of her own. To herself, Lady Tilney however next observed, that Lady Glenmore's choice of society was excellent, and that the manner in which she had arranged her rooms was managed with infinite taste.

These approving, encouraging speeches, from one so versed in the knowledge of the world, and so much looked up to as the arbiter of the elegancies of life, together with all the other incense of flattery which was lavished upon Lady Glenmore on every side, could not fail of taking some effect on her mind. Young, fair, unformed in character, brought up by fond and indulgent parents, who thought she never could err, and who had miserably neglected to implant those religious principles in her breast which alone give stability to character, which impart strength by making us aware of our own weakness, Lady Glenmore was launched on a scene where dangers surrounded her in every shape, and which she was wholly unprepared either to foresee or to sustain. Gentle, amiable,—as yet pure, and unsuspicuous of evil, from being herself free from it,—she was a fitting subject to be moulded into any shape by any evil-designing person that knew gradually to undermine her innocence without alarming her fears. Lady Glenmore's situation in the world, therefore,

with a husband incessantly employed in public duties, consequently often absent, while she was thrown in the midst of a peculiar society, which became, from various circumstances, her only sphere of action, was one of infinite temptation and peril.

At first, as was seen, she mourned over the deprivation of her husband's presence,—a husband whom she loved with child-like tenderness ; but time, *ton*, and necessity soon softened down this infantine regret, and merely at first as a solace for the pain she endured in being absent from him, she entered on the routine of dissipated pleasure which presented itself to her on all sides. No wonder, then, that those worldly pursuits, which were at first resorted to as palliatives for pain, became gradually habitual and necessary to her ; and it is the fatal but inevitable consequence of such a habit of life, to unfit the capacity (even the best and most vigorous capacity) for any higher or nobler aim.

In the thoughtless vivacity of her age, alive to the zest of gayety and pleasure, her better qualities lay dormant : and in this Circean circle her beauty and her youth were certain passports to general admiration, independently of all the adventitious circumstances by which she was environed. On the present occasion, when for the first time she opened her house, she appeared the presiding spirit that gave life animation, and novelty even to the *blase* and hackneyed beings around her. Had Lady Glenmore used, without abusing, the many advantages of her brilliant station, she would not have been to blame, whatever may be said by gloomy ascetics ; nor would they have had power to lead her into danger, had she possessed the stay and guide which a husband's constant presence in society always affords.

This, however, was not *her* case ; and the very nature of her ingenuous and guileless disposition became, in her present circumstances, an additional source of danger, since it rendered her the easy prey of the experienced and practised in deception, by too many of whom she was surrounded, and who, envious of that purity they affected to despise, were restless agents in endeavouring to reduce it to their own corrupt level. It was from some such motive as this, rather than from any impulse of love or passion, that Mr. Leslie Winyard first paid Lady Glenmore attention. He was clever, and knew well how to be prodigal of assiduities to the one

object of his pursuit, in contradistinction to the contempt in which he apparently held all others. This flatters the vanity of the individual to whom they are addressed, and proves a ready passport to a woman's smiles, particularly when experiencing that perfect *délaissement* which is most felt in a crowd, where "there is none to bless us, none whom we can bless."

Under these circumstances Lady Glenmore first listened to Mr. Leslie Winyard; and that advantage once gained, he had art enough to avail himself of it as a step towards intimacy. In a very short space of time, he so far succeeded as to raise at least a *bruit sourd* of his being *l'objet préféré*; an idea which at this period, could any real friend of Lady Glenmore's have suggested to her, she would have started from with indignation; but as it was, she continued laughing and talking on the present occasion with Mr. Leslie Winyard. Had she overheard the observations made upon her by various persons, more particularly those of Lady De Chere and Lord Boileau, she might have learned a lesson which she was destined to buy at a higher price.

"Well, for a *débutante*," said Lord Boileau, "I think *la petite Georgina* has made considerable progress in her career. And how does Glenmore take it?"

"Oh!" replied Lady De Chere, "as every one does what they cannot help, I suppose. Besides, doubtless, he has other things to think of, and must feel glad to have escaped her childish fondness: it must have been exceedingly tiresome; and, after all, the sooner a matrimonial understanding is settled upon a right and proper footing, the better for both parties."

"Very true, Lady De Chere; and nobody settles those matters as well as yourself; you are a model for all married ladies; so much *retenu*, so much *bien-sûr*, and such a lady-like way of doing exactly what you choose, and allowing De Chere to do the same. It is the only way for married persons to be comfortable, or *comme il faut*."

"I am glad you think so, for that has long ago been Lady Boileau's opinion," replied Lady De Chere, with one of her most contumelious smiles, and left Lord Boileau to the satisfaction of his reflections on domestic happiness.

"Pardon me," said Lord Baskeville, gently pulling him aside, and conducting the Comtesse Leinsengen to the other

partment, "but *en qualité de preux*, hem ! I must be permitted to say, *Place aux dames*—a-hem !"

"Oh ! my reveries," rejoined Lord Boileau, "were on very every-day topics ; they can be resumed at any time ; and I am happy in the honour of—"

"Getting out of de way," quickly interrupted the Comtesse, who had the happy knack of cutting all long speeches short, "*milles graces* :" and she glided past him with a sliding bow, adding aside to Lord Baskerville, "I would always make my best-thanks to him for dat ; he is quite a dullification. *Mais voild du nouveau*," she went on to say, in the same breath, looking towards Lady Glenmore and Mr. Leslie Winyard, who were still conversing ; "dat is always de way with your English virtuosos ; dey go *grand train* when dey do go. You are an odd people altogether ; always *en caricatura*. *Et le mari farouche apprivoise* ! quite used to it already ! Well, he is more sensible dan I took him for ; *vogue la galère*." And by this time she had approached close to Lady Glenmore with her sliding step.—"I wished to make you my courtesy, and pay you my compliments on the brilliancy of your *soirée* ; and I am happy to see you did not suffer more from your indisposition at the drawing-room. Indeed, I am sure you could not, for I never saw you looking more *trionphante* than to-night. That heat was enough to kill one ; but you had only a *vapeur* ; and I assure you it was quite becoming : was it not, Lord Baskerville ?"

"Oh, done in excellent style, as all that Lady Glenmore does must be—a-hem ! quite in good taste : no distortions or hysterics or vulgar violences ; all suavity and gentleness—a-hem ! never saw so beautiful a specimen of feint in my life —hem !"

At that moment Lord d'Esterre came up to make his bow to Lady Glenmore, and the Comtesse Leinsengen walked abruptly away, saying, "De very sight of dat man gives me what you call de blue and de green devils."

But Lady Hamlet Vernon was quite of a different opinion ; she had long been a fixture in the doorway, looking anxiously for his arrival. It was late when he came, and she sought to attract his attention, and engage him in conversation. So-llicitous as she was to learn the cause of his having left her in such an unaccountable manner in Cleveland-row, she did not immediately enter upon that subject, but said something

expressive of a general interest in his welfare, and of concern at seeing him look unwell. He eluded her inquiries, and professed being in perfect health ; but she was evidently aware that his mind had undergone some sudden change since she had seen him at the drawing-room, for he no longer spoke in the abstracted manner he had done when there, but joined with an apparent animation and interest in a conversation which she dexterously led to topics that she knew to be most in accordance with his tastes and habits, and particularly so when he was depressed and under the influence of blighted feelings ; at which times he never failed to seek refuge in dreams of ambition and power.

Though Lord Albert d'Esterre had never yet arrived at that degree of intimacy with Lady Hamlet Vernon which might have induced him to open his whole heart to her, on its dearest interests, yet there always seemed to him to be a tacit and delicate understanding of his sentiments, which he felt was soothing, and believed was sincere ; while, on her part, there was a consummate art in appearing to compassionate his disappointment, while, at the same time, she never failed in administering some baneful suspicion, or insinuating some deteriorating observation on the character and conduct of Lady Adeline and her mother, in respect to their behaviour towards himself.

Had Lady Hamlet Vernon by any inadvertent or violent language, betrayed her own malignant feelings, his eyes would have been at once unsealed ; but all she said was so well adapted to effect what she intended, to throw his mind into a sea of doubts, and yet leave no suspicion of her intending to do so, that he yielded, by degrees, an unwilling belief to this sapping, undermining influence, so totally destructive of his peace.

While listening to discourse of this kind, their conversation was interrupted by Lord Rainham's addressing Lady Hamlet Vernon as he passed her, putting some commonplace question (to which, however, he did not wait to hear an answer) about the ensuing breakfast, and then he walked on, talking to himself as usual.

Lady Hamlet Vernon turned quickly to Lord Albert, saying, "Of course you ~~must~~ be there!"

He replied vaguely, apparently not knowing what he was saying ; and it was evident to Lady Hamlet Vernon, that for

some reason or other, the mention of the breakfast raised in his mind a perplexity of thoughts, for he relapsed into an abstracted mood, and became perfectly silent. She was too wary to make any direct observation upon this, and too much accustomed to the fluctuation of his spirits not to know that they must be suffered to ebb and flow without animadversion on her part, if she desired to maintain her influence over him; but she determined secretly to trace the cause of this sudden change to its source, and felt sure that there was something connected with the breakfast of higher interest to him than itself. She endeavoured to regain his attention by turning her conversation into other channels; but in vain: the spell was on him, and soon afterwards he glided from her side and, left the assembly.

Lady Glenmore's party was prolonged to a late hour, and when the people began to move, a considerable time elapsed before they could all depart. To dissipate the *ennui* of these last moments, Lady Glenmore went to her piano-forte, and, in that excitement of spirit which the incense of flattery and the consciousness of worldly success inspires, she sang in her very best manner, and in her most brilliant style, and was herself so absorbed in the sweet sounds she made, that she perceived not that the last of her visitors was gone, till, on looking up, she beheld no one save Mr. Leslie Winyard leaning over her chair. Abashed and somewhat confused, she scarce knew why, Lady Glenmore was about to rise, when Mr. Winyard entreated her just to finish the romance. "It is only two stanzas more," he said, in his most entreating and persuasive tone. Flattered, and not wishing to show she was so, she thought it better to comply, and endeavour to recover herself while singing. In this she succeeded to a certain degree; and having sang the two stanzas he pleaded for, she arose with an intention of immediately retiring, when Mr. Leslie Winyard, who had always *l'apropos du moment* at command, contrived again to arrest her departure, by starting some question which she could not avoid answering, and then proceeding to further converse; while Lady Glenmore, on her part, caught by the glitter of his wit, was amused, and laughed in gayety of spirit.

This scene had continued fully half an hour after every body had left the room, when Lord Boileau, who had been one of the last to go away, made his reappearance suddenly in the apartment where they were sitting.

"I beg you a thousand million of pardons, Lady Glenmore; I am sadly afraid—I have intruded. I am vastly unfortunate; I must seem exceedingly impolite; quite accidental, I assure you. The truth is, my carriage did not arrive, and rather than wait any longer in the room below, I ventured to come up stairs again. You will, I trust, therefore, pardon my reappearance. But, Winyard, if your carriage is waiting, as I believe it has been for some time, will you allow it to set me down, and I will send it back immediately?"

"Oh, yes!" cried Leslie Winyard, "with the greatest pleasure; by all means."—And Lord Boileau turned to go away as he spoke. Lady Glenmore happily, at the moment, felt the awkwardness of her situation, and had sufficient presence of mind to say, "Stop, Lord Boileau, I beg. Mr. Leslie Winyard, I must make my adieu, and wish you good night. I am afraid you will find it dull waiting alone till Lord Boileau's carriage returns." She said this with a determination of manner which sufficiently proved to Mr. Leslie Winyard that he ought to depart, and not press matters further at that time. He bowed, therefore, and whispering something in her ear with an appearance of familiarity, reluctantly took his leave.

As he joined Lord Boileau on the staircase, the latter said to him, in a low tone, "You will never forgive me, Winyard, I fear, for this interruption; but how very cleverly the Glenmore turned it off! I give her great credit for her address!"

Leslie Winyard made no answer, but smiled complacently, and in a manner that left little doubt of the innuendo which he wished his silence to convey; while he inwardly triumphed in the assurance, that he had in Lord Boileau a willing witness and ready herald of all he could wish to be believed.

CHAPTER X.

THE TICKET.

THE allusion made by Lord Albert d'Esterre on the preceding evening to the *fête* at Avington Park, his excuses and explanations on the subject of the ticket, together with Lady Dunmelraise's doubtful mode of receiving them, were circumstances not lost on Mr. Foley; and the hope that he might not only please Lady Adeline by the attention, but also, in the event of his success, tacitly throw suspicion on Lord Albert's sincerity, determined him on endeavouring to procure her, himself, a ticket for the *fête*.

Consequently, at an early hour the following morning, he sought Lady Hamlet Vernon, to request her assistance in the accomplishment of his wishes. The latter possessed too much penetration not to see, in Mr. Foley's anxiety, an elucidation of the disquiet and uneasiness betrayed by Lord Albert d'Esterre when the subject of the breakfast had been accidentally alluded to at Lady Glenmore's by Lord Rainham; and imagined that she perceived, at once, a point where her own wishes might be advanced, at the same time that she appeared attending only to those of the friend who now applied to her. If it was clear to Lady Hamlet Vernon that some misunderstanding, some unpleasant feeling, had existed in Lord Albert's mind, connected with the subject, no better or surer index of it could be found, than in the eager and pressing solicitude displayed on the same point by the person whom she had herself principally influenced in the attempt to become his rival; and to procure the ticket so much wished for (if a possibility of doing so remained) was therefore the immediate conclusion in Lady Hamlet Vernon's mind.

In individuals similarly constituted, an explanation of sentiment, or even of design, is not always requisite; an intuitive principle seems to guide the same point, and directs them generally to the use of the same means; and no inter-

pretation of his wishes was necessary on the part of Mr. Foley, in the present instance, to ensure him the earnest co-operation of Lady Hamlet Vernon. The conversation which had passed on a former occasion between them, on the subject of Lord Albert d'Esterre's engagement with Lady Adeline, and the result hinted at of Mr. Foley's probable success, if disposed to hazard his suit, was alone sufficient to produce an understanding throughout all future manœuvres in the proceeding, and without a word passing to that effect: therefore, on the occasion in question, Mr. Foley felt that he left his application in Lady Hamlet Vernon's hands with a well-founded assurance of its accomplishment, as far, at least, as her exertions could promote such an issue.

In a few hours the ticket was procured and transmitted. On receiving it, Mr. Foley proceeded, with a feeling approaching to triumph to South Audley-street; and in presenting it to Lady Dunmelraise, said something about his happiness in offering what he thought would be agreeable to Lady Adeline, and his hope that some other opportunity would afford itself of proving that her wishes were always laws to him; at the same time, to enhance his air of importance, throwing out hints (as if carelessly) respecting the small number of persons who were to constitute the *réception*, and the peculiarities attending its management, all which insinuated the distinction attached to such as were among the *priées*. Lady Dunmelraise looked expressively at her daughter, as she held the ticket in her hand; as though she would have said, Lord Albert could not procure one; and Lady Adeline, who had sat like a statue, not daring to trust herself to speak, lest she should betray her feelings, now felt this silent appeal too much for endurance, and sought her chamber, there to indulge in an unrepressed burst of sorrow. "Yes," she cried, in broken utterance, as sobs choked her voice; "yes, he is faithless, perfidious; and I—I am wretched."

While Lady Adeline gave way to this natural transport of wounded feeling, her mother guessed too well what her poor child was suffering, and though she suffered with her, yet she could, in the comparative calmness of *her* regret, consider how it was best to act; and Lady Dunmelraise determined on the propriety and expediency of Adeline going to the

breakfast. She therefore continued to converse with Mr. Foley, in order to settle all the necessary arrangements, saying,

"But by whom is Adeline to be *chaperoned*? There do not seem to be many of our acquaintance going, unless, indeed, Lady Borrowdale, Lady Aveling, or Lady Feuille-morte; yet she would, I think, prefer Lady Aveling."

"Pardon me," rejoined Mr. Foley; "none of those ladies are invited."

"Indeed! you astonish me! But the Duchess d'Her-manton; she, at least, cannot be left out?"

"Her grace's name, I know, is not on the list," replied Mr. Foley.

"That is astonishing! Which of the nobility, then, now in London, are to be of this party?"

"Those," answered Mr. Foley, "who are of the *scelta*."

"And pray who are those?" He named the Boileaus, De Cheres, Tenderdens, Tilneys, Leinsengens, &c. &c. Lady Dunmelraise smiled, and then looked rather grave.

"This would be laughable," she said, "if it were not melancholy to think, that people can suffer themselves to be so led away by a love of false distinction, as to attempt to set aside all that is truly good and great, and to impose laws and rules upon society, whose general tendency cannot be productive of any real advantage, but the reverse." Mr. Foley affected to agree with her in part, but said, "There was always, at all times, something of the same sort existing. It was a species of excrescence," he said, "which grew out of the plethora of the London world. It might be dangerous for some; but for Lady Adeline—he conceived she might look at its folly, and *efflueré* the charm of its novelty and splendour, without the least danger."

"It is from this persuasion," rejoined Lady Dunmelraise; "that I can augur no harm in her attending the breakfast, although I should be sorry to see her always forming a component part of such a society. But whom can she accompany on the present occasion? Is Lady Louisa Blithewaite going?"

"She is: as a sister of the Duke of Mercington's, she has been admitted."

"That will do," said Lady Dunmelraise. "She is the very person under whose care I should like my Adeline to

be placed. I will write to her directly." Mr. Foley, who began to fear that after all he should not carry his point, was now delighted ; and he took leave of Lady Dunmelraise, well pleased with the prospect of his success. When Lady Dunmelraise had despatched her note to Lady Louise Blithewaite, she sought Lady Adeline in her chamber, whom she found in some measure calm and composed.

" You see how it is, my dearest child ; but your painful task will soon be over, I trust. It is suspense only that is not to be borne, since it prevents the mind from resting on any one point, or coming to any conclusion ; and it is for this very reason, my loved Adeline, that I wish you to summon resolution and attend the breakfast. It is right Lord Albert should know that we are aware of the idle subterfuge he wished to palm upon our belief ; and it is well, too, for your future peace, that you should so convince yourself of his dereliction of all honourable principle, that you will not in any after-moment fancy that you have forfeited all happiness in losing him." By these and similar reasonings and persuasions, Lady Dunmelraise convinced her daughter that she ought to comply with her wishes, and prepare to meet this painful trial. Having, therefore, given way to the infirmity of human weakness only so far as that indulgence was necessary to a recovery of self-management, Lady Adeline rallied her powers of mental control ; and with that steady serenity and determination of character which proceeds from one only source, and which bears up those who act upon its influence through all the storms of life, she acceded to whatever Lady Dunmelraise required of her.

In the course of that day, Lord Albert called in South Audley-street ; but neither Lady Adeline nor her mother were at home. In the distempered state of his mind, he thought he had been denied, and in this idea he was almost confirmed by seeing Mr. Foley leave the house a few moments after he had ridden from the door ; though, in fact, this was not the case, the latter having merely gone into the drawing-room a short time before Lord Albert called, to leave a note explanatory of some points respecting the hour of going to the *réve*, &c. &c. and which Lady Dunmelraise had requested him to ascertain. The effect, however, produced upon Lord Albert's imagination was the same as if the fact had been so ; and in this effervescence of

mind he directed his horse's head, with a feeling of something like habit, towards Lady Hamlet Vernon's.

When the heart is bruised, and the understanding perplexed, it is astonishing to think how the strongest minds turn to lean on some one being whom they deem willing to sooth and share in their feelings ; and if it is a weakness, it is one so linked to all the best parts of our nature, that there would be no advantage gained by exchanging it for that cold hardness of self-sufficiency, to which some persons lay claim as affording them a superiority over their fellow-creatures. Such was certainly not Lord Albert's case. Whatever he might or might not confess to himself, it was with a worn-out spirit that he sought Lady Hamlet Vernon ; and on hearing that she was at home, he threw himself off his horse, and hastened into her presence. Although she was too well skilled in reading the human heart, not to be aware that she owed this visit rather to his displeasure in other quarters, than from a spontaneous wish to enjoy her society, yet she received him, as she always did, with those gentle smiles which captivate the heart, and which is the temper ever sought for and expected in woman.

Lady Hamlet Vernon knew that the general selfishness of man seeks only the reflection of his own sensations from the sympathy of women ; and that whatever cause a woman may have of pain or pleasure, it is *his* feelings, and not her own, which she must consult, sooth, and influence ; and that, in short, when she ceases to be his sunshine, he ceases to court her influence.

It was acting under this conviction, which made Lady Hamlet Vernon, with infallible delicacy and truth of tact, neither seem to search into secrets which Lord Albert did not choose to reveal, nor yet appear carelessly ignorant of the melancholy restlessness by which she saw him affected ; but alternately she soothed, flattered, and sympathized in all he said, till at last she succeeded, for the time being, in reconciling him with himself, and in a great measure allaying the irritation of those various feelings which almost distracted him when he first entered her apartment.

Before he took his leave, it was finally arranged between them, that he should accompany her to the *féte* the next day, if he could leave Downing-street in time ; and if he could not, he would, he said, meet her at Avington Park, and go

there with Lord Glenmore, who, in the event of his being detained, would be detained also.

While thus variously agitated had been the feelings of some, whose hearts, by circumstances, had become interested in this idle *fête*, the principal movers in it, in *their* way, were not less anxious for its success and brilliancy. For the preservation of its exclusive and chosen character, and the arrangement of all its endless detail of luxury, each member of the *société choisie* was more or less busy and *affairé*. Lady Tilney, with her usual activity, was the first in her exertions ; driving to the houses of all connected with the arrangements, examining into every minute particular, and, above all, guarding against the possibility of any person whose name was not on her list creeping in through the weakness of some member of the committee, who, in a moment of unallowed natural feeling, might have invited a sister, or a mother, or a brother, who were from a class *without the pale*.

At Lady Ellersby's she met Lady Tenderden, and the Comtesse Leinsengen, and Lady De Chere, and Lord Boileau, who came in, as though by chance, one after the other, each saying, in different words, the same thing.

"How fortunate I am to have met you ! I wished to know at what hour you are to go to Avington Park to-morrow ;" and all applied to Lady Tilney. She named three o'clock.

"La !" cried Lady Ellersby, "I shall not have awoke from my first sleep at that hour : surely four o'clock is quite time enough."

"I shall not go till den," cried the Comtesse Leinsengen. "One has always enough of dose things dat last for ever. Breakfast, dinner, supper, and den breakfast again, before one gets away."

"Oh ! but you know," replied Lady Tenderden, "dis *fête*, my dear Comtesse, is not like any other ; dere will be no one dere but ourselves, our own *société* ; and dere are so many pleasant tings to be done,—going on de water, walking about, and de *loterie* ; one would not choose to lose dat."

"Oh ! certainly not," exclaimed Lady Boileau. "I am told there are to be some exceedingly magnificent things. Lord Albert d'Esterre has bought some really fine jewels."

"Perhaps so," said Lady De Chere, in her blunt way ;

"but we all know who will have these: the chances are wisely ordained beforehand."

"Have you got your *billet de loterie*?" asked the Comtesse Leinsengen of the speaker.

"No," replied Lady De Chere, with an air of pique, "but *I am* to have one."

"Certainly," rejoined Lady Tilney, who read the Comtesse's intended triumph; and who chose to show her, on many occasions, that if any one had a right to tyrannize it was herself, or that, at least, if such a thing were attempted, it should be *qui mieux mieux*.

"Certainly, Lady Boileau, there will be a lottery ticket for *you*, and all the *other* ladies; at least, I shall conceive it exceedingly wrong indeed if there is not. But should there be any mistake, depend upon *my* rectifying it. And now, ladies," she continued, addressing them generally, "there is one point we have not touched upon—our costume."

"Oh! *demi-toilette*, of course," exclaimed Lady Tenderden.

"Of course," echoed Lady Tilney; afraid lest it should be thought that she had asked the question with a view to arrange her own dress according to her friends' dictation: "but I meant, should we have a *change* of dress for the evening?"

"Oh! what a trouble!" said Lady Ellersby.

"Yes, my dear; but you know, after walking about all day, our dress will not look fresh for the evening," said Lady Boileau. "However, I am told, that among other *galantries* our cavaliers have engaged a certain number of milliners, to be in attendance with every kind of decoration, so that we need think little on that point."

"No, really!" cried Lady Ellersby, with something more than her usual animation: "that is well imagined."

"And I will tell you," said Lady Tenderden, "what is the prettiest ting of all, de best imagined possible,—every lady is to have her cipher formed of her chosen flower. As to me, I shall be like Louis de Fourteenth's favourite, and am to have *un salon tout tapissé de jonquilles*. After all is said, dere is nobody but the French dat know what it is to be gallant. And now, *mes chères dames*, I must depart. If any thing occurs, any change takes place, you will let me know. You have all settled your parties for going, of

course : mine has been long arranged wid de Glenmores and Mr. Leslie Winyard. Adieu, adieu!"

"Of course," said the Comtesse Leinsengen : "mi ladi need not to have taken de pains to inform us on dat subject."

"I think," said Lady Tilney, "considering that this party is made expressly by *us*, and is quite a thing apart, that she might have passed over for once her tiresome preference of every thing French. But she is always making out that it is the French alone who do every thing in perfection ; and that is exceedingly impolite, to say the least of it."

"Very true," added Lady De Chere ; "and considering that she is what she is by having married an Englishman, *c'est un peu fort.*"

"But," said Lady Tilney, breaking abruptly off, "I must say adieu. *Chère* Lady Ellersby, adieu ! Remember ! three o'clock, at the latest, to-morrow. And we positively can allow no more tickets. No persuasions or entreaties must be suffered to prevail. The affair is finished. I have put my veto on the d'Hermanton," she added, turning round as she approached the door : "that would have been too much."

"I wonder," said Lady Ellersby, as Lady Tilney left the room, "that she is not dead with fatigue. Surely never any body did so much."

"To so little purpose," said the Comtesse Leinsengen, sharply ; "for, after all, de public of your nation are a great deal too *révèche* to let any one person lead dem about à droite et à gauche. Much better it is to cut de matter short to have one's own *société*, and never care what any body says or does or thinks. Please oneself one's own way, dat is de true liberty. But dat ladi has so many *fire-irons* all going at once, some of dem must fail, and den she is out of humour."

There was a general smile at what the Comtesse had said ; and they all enjoyed hearing Lady Tilney found fault with, though no one exactly chose to be the person who should hazard such an opinion.

"Ah ! Comtesse," observed Lady Boileau, "you are the most amusing person in the world."

"*Seulement parceque je suis la plus franche*," she replied ; and kissing her hand to Lady Ellersby, glided out of the room.

"If she had said *brusque*, instead of *franche*," cried Lady De Chere, "she would have been nearer the truth."

"Eh, eh, eh!" laughed Lady Ellersby, as she obeyed, "Perhaps so; but it is like smelling salts to hear her remarks; and really I do not know what I should do without something pungent now and then to keep me awake."

"Besides," rejoined Lady Boileau, "we have all our own particular meanings for particular phrases; and Comtesse Leinsengen is not the only person who gives her own meaning to a phrase which, in its general acceptation, is of quite a different import. Don't you agree with me, Lady De Chere?"

"May be so. But in as far as regards myself, I always mean what I say, though I do not say always all that I mean. But we are quite philosophical, and I have no time for disquisitions; so, fair ladies, good day, and may to-morrow be propitious for hats, caps, and *farbalas*. In that we are all agreed. Farewell!" And she departed.

"My dear Lady Ellersby," said Lady Boileau, approaching her in a voice of earnest entreaty, "do not let Lady Tilney forget my lottery-ticket; for, after all, you know, one likes to have a *chance* of the fine things."

"Oh yes! ONE does. I will not forget. Trust to me."

"You are always *so* good-humoured! Adieu, then, *till* to-morrow! I know you will not forget me."

"Not if you can prevent it," said Lady Ellersby to herself, as she closed the door, and rose to ring her bell. "Send Fanchon to me." And when Fanchon, the maid, obeyed the summons, her mistress said, "I am half dead with the clamour of those dear friends of mine. Put my *roquelaure* over me, and let me sleep. See that I be not disturbed. How loud they did all talk!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE BREAKFAST.

EVERY one has felt, some time or other, that when the first warmth of indignation against a loved object begins to cool, the recollection of a thousand tender reminiscences comes floating in to soften and subdue resentment; and that

many an ebb and flow of fondness must take place before the deep trace of love is washed from our remembrance. Thus it was with Lady Adeline : there was a lurking weakness in her heart (if the tenacity of true love can be called a weakness), which made her loth to cast Lord Albert thence, even if he *were* guilty, for the moment, of deserting her.

Even in that case she thought he might be reclaimed. It was difficult, it was impossible, to fathom the heart : who had a right to do so ? and with these thoughts she condemned herself as wrong and precipitate in her judgment. The best, she conceived, that remained for her to do, under her present painful circumstances, would be to retire to the country, and await there the issue of his determination ; but not to brave him. Under the impression of these feelings, she lamented having yielded her consent to be present at the breakfast.

"If I am to see him there," she exclaimed, inwardly, "devoted to another, what good end will it answer thus to add anguish to anguish ? And, at all events, Albert will think better of me if I avoid his presence, and, by so doing, show how much I feel, and how little I am desirous of prying into his conduct."

Lady Dunmelraise soon saw that such were the feelings of her daughter, when, in the course of the day, a recurrence was made to the subject of the breakfast ; and it was with pleasure that she received a visit from her sister, Lady Delamere, in the evening, from the hope that her persuasions, joined to those which she had already availed herself of, might have additional weight with Lady Adeline.

Many concurring circumstances had led both Lady Dunmelraise and Lady Delamere to the conviction that Lord Albert was wholly undeserving of such a treasure, and induced the suspicion that he perhaps enjoyed the consciousness of being beloved by her daughter, while, at the same time, he played with her feelings, and sacrificed them remorselessly at the shrine of his own vanity. To impress their opinions upon her Adeline's mind, Lady Dunmelraise conceived to be absolutely necessary, with a view to wean her from her strong attachment : and so convinced was she of the necessity of this measure, in order to restore Lady Adeline to any thing like happiness, that much as it

pained Lady Dunmelraise to make herself the witness of Lord Albert's desertion and insincerity, yet she felt convinced that to do so would be at once the kindest and most effectual measure.

In this she was confirmed, by Lady Delamere; and with all the persuasion of affection, and all the force of truth, they both represented the matter in so strong a light to Lady Adeline, that she yielded her feelings to their direction, saying,

"Well, dearest mamma and dearest aunt, make of me what you will, do with me as you choose; but remember, I am a poor automaton that can no longer act or think for itself. I feel crushed, withered, wretched, unable to do any thing but yield a passive obedience. In that I know I am fulfilling my duty; and if I live, that thought must bring peace in its train."

"*If you live!*" exclaimed Lady Dunmelraise, shuddering, as she looked earnestly at her altered countenance. "Dearest child! talk not thus;" and as she pressed her to her breast, she felt that she must evermore consider Lord Albert as the destroyer of her child's happiness. At an early hour that evening, Lady Adeline retired to rest; and worn out with the agitation of the day, yet calmed by the secret sense of satisfaction which a fulfilment of duty and obedience to a loved and loving parent never fails to produce, she fell into that sweet, childlike sleep of innocence which is the balm of peace.

The morning came in lowering, and a few heavy drops of rain seemed to announce the impending overthrow of the splendour of the *fête*; but about midday the dark clouds broke away, and the sun came out clear and bright, giving assurance of fair weather. By three o'clock, the park, and the squares and streets in its immediate vicinity, presented a gay sight in the splendid equipages that were waiting at the doors, or driving to the destined scene of the rendezvous. Lady Adeline had suffered herself to be attired, in the dress her mother had prepared for her, which was well adapted for the hour and scene, and at once splendid, yet chastely beautiful: and as something of the natural weakness of youth and vanity found a brief place even in the breast of the ingenuous Adeline, a consciousness of her charms stole over her, as she cast a rapid glance at her

person reflected in her mirror, and she thought, with a feeling of something like renovated hope and pleasure ; " He may not deem me so beneath his attention." And then again a quick return of reflection made her sigh ; remembering how valueless the affection is, how undeserving the name, which depends alone on personal charms. But still a secret hope remained, that if she could once again attract his regards, she might find the way to retain them on a sure foundation.

As this hope, in despite of reason, took possession of her heart, it tinged her cheek with a brighter hue, and gave an animation to her whole appearance which even deceived those who loved her most. There was a feeling of exultation in Lady Dunmelraise's breast, as she gazed delightedly on this dear object of her solicitude ; for, conscious that the gem within was as precious as the fair casket in which it was enshrined, she thought that Lord Albert little knew his own true interests in exchanging such a pearl of price for common merchandise ; and she was right.

When Lady Adeline arrived at Lady Louisa Blithewaite's, she found a party assembled there, among whom were the Duke of Mercington and Mr. Foley. The former was exceedingly struck with her appearance, and manifested his admiration in a way not to be overlooked or misunderstood, at the same time with all that delicacy which was due to the person by whom it was excited. Lady Louisa Blithewaite received her with marks of the greatest interest ; and relieved the embarrassment she felt on perceiving herself the object of general remark, by entering immediately into discourse with her on various subjects connected with the immediate object of their meeting.

As soon as the first awkwardness was passed, Lady Adeline recovered her presence of mind, and joined in the conversation with that natural yet cultivated understanding which is felt in touching on the most trivial topics, as well as in discussing the most serious ones, and never fails to win admiration and respect. Mr. Foley hovered around her, sometimes leaning on the back of her chair, and affecting to speak to her with the familiarity of intimacy ; alluding to times and circumstances of which the present company were ignorant, and endeavouring, by this conduct, to wear the appearance of being an *attaché* of Lady Adeline's.

But as she did not share in this intention, and her conversation being directed equally to the different persons around, his attempt was a failure.

It was impossible, at the present moment, but that Lady Adeline's mind should be taken off from herself; and the bustle of arranging how the parties should go, together with the constant and varied homage she received from all present, but particularly from the Duke of Mercington, which could not fail of being for the time gratifying, all combined to produce that species of excitement which diffused an animation and lustre over her features and manners altogether magical.

After much disquisition, it was finally arranged, that the Duke of Mercington should accompany his sister and Lady Adeline in the same carriage; and Mr. Foley, with evident mortification, was obliged to attend another party. Nobody knew better than the duke how to render himself agreeable when he chose it. There was a bland sunshine on his countenance, and a kindness in his manner, which was a key to all hearts; and on the present occasion he felt irresistibly impelled to endeavour to please. Every word Lady Adeline spoke during the drive, though her words were not many, and not directed to any subject on which the stronger qualities of her mind could be called into exercise, had yet so much originality in them, from that perfect nature, unobscured by the factitious ways of the world, which makes even the most trite and common things appear in a new light, that the duke whispered to his sister, when they arrived at Avington Priory, "She is perfection. I never met with such grace of mind."

On entering the gay, enchanted scene of the breakfast, all eyes were directed towards Lady Adeline; and as the duke walked between her and his sister, the envious whisper ran round, "Who is she? Who invited her? How very odd she should be here!" but none durst openly find fault with one whom the Duke of Mercington protected and countenanced. Lord Gascoigne observed, as they walked in,

"So at last he is caught;" to which Lord Baskerville maliciously replied, "He may be caught—hem! but there are two words to that bargain—a-hem! For my part, I would rather be the cobbler at the corner of the street, who

knows his stall's his own, than be in the questionable position of any man, however great. I do not envy him—hem!"

Mr. Foley continued to take every opportunity of affecting intimacy with Lady Adeline; addressing her at every moment, asking her opinion of the *fête*, of the arrangement, of the scene; and then passed to observations upon the *superior* beauty of Dunmelraise, and the happiness of riding with her about that wild scenery: to all of which she replied naturally, saying,

"They were perfectly different, and admitted of no comparison."

In this manner he endeavoured to create an appearance of greater intimacy than belonged to common acquaintance; and then requested her, if disengaged, to dance the first cotillion with him.

To this she agreed. But, in the mean time, the Duke of Mercington, who had, with one of his *engouements*, selected Lady Adeline as his favourite of the day, and therefore considered every other person's approach an intrusion, being annoyed by Mr. Foley's constant interruption of the conversation, proposed to his sister and Lady Adeline, and their party, to go on the water. Although the duke could not without positive rudeness exclude Mr. Foley as they entered the boat, yet, by taking a seat on one side of Lady Adeline, and placing his sister on the left, he secured something like a conversation *suivie*, which he could not otherwise have done.

As they were embarking, the same junto of young men who had made their remarks on the duke's party when he entered, now stood by the lake; for the same system observed in Hyde Park, of arranging themselves in line wherever there were women, in order, as Leslie Winyard said, *pour se laisser admirer*, was adhered to on the present occasion. "His grace," said Lord Baskerville, "seems to be really *épris*, and to be meditating matrimony."

"Who is she?" again questioned Lord Gascoigne.—"She must be something quite new, for I never saw her before."

"Oh! she, you know," replied Lord Baskerville, who always affected to know every body's story, "she is the girl that Lord Albert d'Esterre was said to be engaged to, but who broke off the engagement from some reason or other;

probably because she had no intention of marrying a field-preacher."

"It would have been a confounded pity if she had," growled Lord Tonnerre. "She is a very beautiful creature. I should not care if I married her myself."

"How very gallant you are become, Tonnerre," said Lord Boileau. "But, Baskerville, you forget, in passing sentence on Lord Albert, that he is become one of us, has cast his slough, and come out with a new skin."

"Yea," replied Lord Gascoigne, "thanks to Lady Hamlet Vernon, he has found out *que le diable n'est pas si noir.*"

"I don't care," said Lord Baskerville, "what he has found out; but I have found out that he is very disagreeable, and I never wish to have him in my society—hem!"

"Pardon me," said Lord Gascoigne; "I think you are too severe to-day, Basky. The man is well enough; mighty polite; makes a good bow; and is well received by the ladies."

"Upon my word," observed Lord Tonnerre, "the women, now-a-days, are all gone mad, I think, upon my word. I'd keep those under my care, at least, in good order. One must have a tight hand upon the best of them." At that moment, Lady Tenderden and Lady Glenmore arrived, escorted by Mr. Leslie Winyard and two or three other young men. Every body crowded round Lady Glenmore to pay her their court; hoped she admired the *fête* and the decorations: to all which she replied in the affirmative with childlike gayety and delight.

"But you have not seen the bower, the beautiful bower," said Lord Gascoigne; "allow me to conduct you thither."

"Oh, but first come and see my alcove *tout tapisé de jonquilles*;" and they passed on, Lady Glenmore continuing to lean on Mr. Leslie Winyard's arm, and tacitly rejecting the offer of Lord Gascoigne, in that hurry of pleasure which leaves no capability for real enjoyment.

"Well," said Lord Baskerville, looking after Lady Glenmore, "I am of the same opinion still. There is a sort of rude health and vulgar jollity about that Lady Glenmore, hem! which she will never get rid of. I wonder how Leslie Winyard can waste his time in that quarter."

"He does not waste it, I can assure you," said Lord Boileau, significantly. "Remind me, Basky, to tell you a

good story, of the truth of which I myself am witness. It happened on the night of *la petite* Georgina's party. I never looked so foolish in my life. I shall never forget it."

"But the odd thing is," interrupted Lord Gascoigne, "that Glenmore, who set out by being the most temacious husband imaginable, is as quiet as a mouse about it. How can you account for this, Tonnerre? Do you think apathy is one of the fruits of marriage?"

"Why do you ask me the question, who have never tried? But this I am certain of; I would keep my wife in order, if I were married to-morrow. You had better ask Glenmore himself."

"So I will," said Lord Gascoigne, turning on his heel. "I will go look for him for the purpose."

"What a cool hand Gascoigne is!" observed Lord Beau, addressing Lord Baskerville. "I would give the world to be like him."

"It might suit *you*."

"Ehew!" replied the latter, "but it would n't me;" and he walked slowly away to join the Comtesse Leinsengen.

It was by this time pretty late in the afternoon, and the various persons were beginning to draw together with a view to making up their dinner *coteries*. Lord Albert and Lord Glenmore had been prevented, as they anticipated they should, from setting out early by business. The former had in consequence despatched a note to Lady Hamlet Vernon, to let her know of his being detained beyond the hour she had named for going to Avington Priory, but saying he would join her there; and this had determined her to excuse herself from accompanying Lady Glenmore's party with whom she was to have gone; for, well aware of all the circumstances attendant on Lady Adeline's being present at the breakfast, she was particularly anxious to appear there herself, accompanied by Lord Albert d'Esterre.

Lady Hamlet Vernon, therefore, ordered her carriage a short time before the hour named by Lord Albert for his departure; and having driven slowly towards Avington Priory, she calculated the time so exactly, that Lord Glenmore and Lord Albert overtook her on the road. They kissed their hands to her as they passed, and she thought that Lord Albert looked pleased in the idea that she might

have waited for him. Their carriages entered the gates of the Priory together ; and having alighted, Lady Hamlet Vernon took the offered arms of Lord Albert and Lord Glenmore, and they proceeded in quest of Lady Glenmore and her party, making inquiries, as they went, of every one if they had seen her. Some said she was here, some there ; and Lord Gascoigne, who now approached, observed, that he had seen her last with Lady Tenderden, Leslie Winyard, Rainham, Frank Ombre, &c. going towards Rosamond's Bower. "But," continued he, "if one really wants to find any body in a crowd, the way is, to sit down in one place. My advice, therefore, is tranquilly to await their repassing ; and you will have time enough to see the lions afterward." As he concluded this speech, he turned round to Spencer Newcomb, and whispered in his ear, "I think Winyard owes me one for this."

"Oh ! a hundred, I should say ; for

'Quand on est jeune, et gentillette,
On ne va pas au bois, fillette,
On ne va pas au bois pour rien.'"

Lady Hamlet Vernon, however, on this occasion, rather wished to see than be seen, and deemed it more agreeable to walk about leaning upon Lord Albert d'Esterre's arm, and therefore replied, "I have not patience to sit still ; let us rather have the amusement of looking for Lady Glenmore ;" and as he spoke they moved on.

"That affair goes on well," remarked Lord Gascoigne, as his eye followed Lord Albert and Lady Hamlet Vernon.

"Yes," said Mr. Spencer Newcomb, "she is a clever woman ; *elle pique ses attachés*. I give her credit for having angled so dexterously. A little while, and d'Esterre will be well landed."

While these persons thus passed their kindly comments, Lord Albert, Lord Glenmore, and Lady Hamlet Vernon walked about the gardens, and after a search of some time found Lady Tenderden, Lady Glenmore, and their party, who were laughing and talking gayly in the alcove *tapissé de jonquilles*. Mr. Leslie Winyard was playing with one of the long ribands that pended from Lady Glenmore's hat, and she seemed listening complacently to his conversation. The moment, however, that she beheld Lord Glenmore, she

dusted towards him, her face beaming with pleasure, and passing her arm through his, and looking up fondly in his face, said something in a low voice, to which he replied with answering tenderness ; and as she continued to hang upon his arm, expressing her admiration of the *féte*, he appeared to enter into her delight, and to be as much amused as herself.

“ What perfection of duplicity ! ” whispered Lord Boileau to Lord Tonnerre, as they entered the alcove together, and witnessed this meeting.

“ And what a wide swallow *he* has,” replied the other ; while Mr. Leslie Winyard, mortified at the interruption which Lord Glenmore’s arrival had occasioned, but at the same time too much master of his art to evince his *real* feeling, endeavoured to show himself satisfied with the semblance of a secret understanding between himself and Lady Glenmore as to her conduct towards her husband.

“ What perfection of duplicity ! ” repeated Lord Boileau, as he observed what passed, and as Mr. Winyard, approaching Lord Glenmore, addressed him in easy, familiar terms, making himself appear to be, as in all similar cases, and *selon tous les règles depuis tous les temps, l’ami de la maison*, and equally necessary to both parties. The whole scene did not pass unobserved by Lord Albert, who recollect ed what observations had been made before, by some of the same party, on Lady Glenmore at the drawing-room ; and he felt he despised those who could thus lightly tamper with the honour of the man whose notice they courted, whose society they affected to like, and to whose intimacy they endeavoured to aspire. But it was a subject on which he could only think. Miserably, our best friends are frequently precluded, from circumstances, from being of the least use to us.

After a short interval, passed in visiting the different objects of beauty and interest in the gardens of the Priory, the hour arrived for assembling the guests under the marquees where the *déjeuner dinatoire* was prepared ; and Lord and Lady Glenmore, with their party, adjourned thither. The Leinsengen, Baskerville, Boileau, and Lady De Chere, were already placed when they arrived ; but all made way for them, and in the *mélée* of the moment Mr. Leslie Winyard succeeded in securing his post by the side of Lady

Glenmore. After the first clamour of voices had subsided, every one spoke to his neighbour only ; and Mr. Lealie Winyard availed himself of this opportunity to engross Lady Glenmore's attention in every possible way. Lady Boileau, who was seated opposite and rather *descouvré*, amused herself by remarking every glance and every little attention which Mr. Winyard addressed to Lady Glenmore ; and whispered to the Comtesse Leinsengen, " *Ca va grand train*," indicating by a look those of whom she spoke.

" O dat is always de way in dis country : either *des dragones de vertu*, or else, *tête baissé*, you give de *grand scandale*. 'Tis noting new ; 'tis à *zotre ordinaire*. *Ca fait pitié*, but it cannot be help. *Toujours des grandes passions*, which end in de run away, de food for de newspapers ; and den *sauve qui peut*, and de woman is left to sink or swim, *que vous êtes maladroites, vous autres Angloises*."

" Pardon me, dear Comtesse," said Lord Gascoigne, joining in the conversation, and speaking in the tone of satire with which he sometimes lashed the foibles of the day, " pardon me, Comtesse, not always : there are many who, a little while after their *écarté*, have retired from the scene in order to return to it with a fresh title and fresh fame. It only depends upon the rank that is held by the *préféré*. It is true, were he as handsome as Adonis, and as seducing as Love himself, that would be no excuse ; but if he has wealth, power, title, the affair passes through a regular process of *sous entendu*, and then all is smooth again, *et on passe à des nouvelles amours.*"

" Very true," rejoined the Comtesse Leinsengen sharply ; " and so much for your boasted London *morale*."

" Pray, however, remember, Comtesse, that London is not England, nor England London ; although, in regard to foreign capitals, that inference might once have held good, and Paris could be justly said to be all France. But our system of politics, as well as of private life, is one which no foreigner ever did or ever will understand."

The Comtesse Leinsengen gave her accustomed shrug, turned away before Lord Gascoigne had finished speaking, and the whole party soon after broke up, the ladies retiring into the house to change their dress and prepare for the ball.

The dancing was already begun when Lady Glenmore's party entered the ball-room. The whole glitter of the beau-

tiful scene, the perfume exhaled from the plants, which floated through the freshness of the country air, all conspired to take the senses captive; and never did Lady Glenmore look more brilliant, or appear in more joyous spirits. There was an ingenuousness about her which enchanted even those who had least of it themselves, and who thought that perfection of manners consisted only in the refinement of art, to the exclusion of all natural feeling. As she was led away to the dance by Mr. Leslie Winyard, Lord Glenmore's eyes followed her, beaming with love and admiration.

"*Elle est ravissante,*" said Lady Tenderden.

Lord Glenmore evinced his assent to the truth of this remark by a smile, which Lady Tenderden was willing that those around should consider directed to herself; and she continued to keep Lord Glenmore in conversation for some time, to improve an opinion, which it was always her aim to maintain, of her possessing an influence over him. Nor was the powerful charm of the scene, and the circumstances attendant upon it, experienced alone by Lady Glenmore. Lady Hamlet Vernon, in her turn, also acknowledged their influence. The consciousness of the presence of the object of her love, and the unalloyed confidence of the continuance of that enjoyment throughout the evening, gave to her beauty an air of triumph and of joy, which, had it sprung from an honest, innocent source, instead of being founded on intrigue and artifice, would have possessed a power and a charm which, as it was, her beauty missed. As she walked up the ball-room, leaning on Lord Albert's arm, a crowd intervened between them and the dancers; for every body had clustered together in one spot, attracted by some object which was hid from those at a distance.

Lord Albert heard on all sides exclamations of admiration on the beauty and the grace of some person who was at this moment dancing. Their curiosity was excited, and they pressed the more eagerly onwards; till, arriving suddenly at an opening in the circle formed round the dancers, Lord Albert perceived Lady Adeline Seymour immediately opposite to him,—the attraction of all eyes, the object of the concentrated admiration of the whole room. She was dancing with Mr. Foley;—dancing, not with the affectation of drawling over the floor as though she were doing penance, but with airiness and elasticity of spirit, tempered by grace

and feminine delicacy. Lady Adeline was not at first conscious of his presence ; while, as he stood rooted to the spot, he had leisure to gaze upon her in mingled surprise and agitation before she perceived him ; but when she did, her eyes for a moment rested on his, with an expression which, brief as the moment was, shook his very frame. It was an agonized look of love and reproach : for not only did she see one whom she now was forced to believe a rival in his affections leaning fondly on Lord Albert's arm, but in the bosom of that rival the very myrtle sprig which Lord Albert had taken from her at the drawing-room with such seeming devotion. She identified it too well as being the same ; for in her bitterest agony, when she plucked it on the morning of the Court, she had told over every leaf and every flower ; and connecting each of them with some allusion to past days, and again feeling it to be the medium of a returning act of fondness, how could *she* forget, or mistake it for any other myrtle ? As Lady Adeline now beheld this corroborating evidence of Lord Albert's cruelty and deceit, the colour glowed and faded in rapid alternation on her cheek ; she seemed lost in thought ; her footsteps became unsteady, and ready to sink under her ; and it was a moment or two before Mr. Foley, holding her hand, could succeed in drawing her attention. She appeared to gaze at him like one whose senses had fled : then, as if making an effort to recall them, she stepped forward to continue the dance ; but the buoyancy of her motion was gone ; her late gossamer footstep seemed exchanged for one of lead ; her eyes sought the ground : and when it was her turn to go back to her place, she remained in the middle of the circle till again rendered conscious of her mistake by the other parties advancing.

In this pause of the dance, Lady Adeline had an opportunity of recovering her presence of mind ; and, calling to her aid the just indignation which Lord Albert's conduct inspired, she felt herself armed against the tenderer feelings ; and by what she construed his treachery and desertion, she was enabled to steel her heart to every soft emotion, and not afford greater triumph to her rival, or greater gratification to his self-love, by betraying any marks of sensibility. This idea, together with what she owed her mother, whose feelings she well knew would be deeply wounded if through weakness she made any public disclosure of her suffering,

enabled Lady Adeline to rally her spirits sufficiently to go through her painful part with apparent ease and indifference ; and so completely did she obtain the mastery over herself, that perhaps no one, save Lady Hamlet Vernon, was conscious of the workings of that breast, the peace of which she was perfidiously destroying. Lord Albert even was a stranger to what she endured ; for, blind to the errors of his own conduct, he of course became blinded to their consequence, and never attributed Lady Adeline's behaviour towards him to the natural result of his own in respect to her. It is ever thus ;—we look not to our errors as the cause of the misfortunes which befall us, and the pains and penalties to which we are doomed.

From the moment Lord Albert first beheld Mr. Foley dancing with Lady Adeline, he had remained transfixed to the spot. And how can language render by its slow process the thousand rapid feelings which gush simultaneously from the heart, and seem to pass through the mind at the same moment ? Jealousy, indignation, scorn (though love in ambush was concealed beneath these bitter passions), alternately distracted him. The mother and daughter he alike accused of subtilty and subterfuge. He recalled to mind Lady Dunmelraise's manner to him ; her words especially, and her expression, on the subject of the breakfast : Adeline's feigned indifference to it, now contrasted with her actual presence there, dancing with Mr. Foley. All these circumstances seemed to confirm the fatal truth ; and disappointed love and mortified vanity, and a sense of having been deceived, juggled, contemned, were struggling at one and the same moment for ascendancy in his bosom. In this state of mind, the time, the place, the whole scene, save only this one prominent feature of interest, were to him as though they existed not. As the dance drew to a close, he asked himself what line of conduct he should pursue. Should he speak to Lady Adeline in a language of reproach ? should he give utterance to his feelings in a few brief words of overwhelming import ? No, he would not ; it was beneath him. And if she *was* unworthy, and had forgotten what was due to him and to *herself*, he would never forget what was due to *her*. Could he address Adeline with calm indifference ?—impossible !—his heart would not second the deception.

While he stood thus lost in thought, like one bereft of sense, the workings of his soul were not unheeded by her who leaned on his arm the while. She felt that this very instant was the critical point of all her hopes, and she almost unconsciously pressed the arm on which she rested closer to her breast. Her respiration was broken ; her eyes wandered in quick succession on Lord Albert and Lady Adeline alternately ; and though she dared not propose to move from the spot where they stood, yet to remain there was torture. At last the dance, which had appeared to her interminable, ended ; and Lady Adeline passed on with Mr. Foley, without taking any notice of Lord Albert whatever, as though she saw him not.

Lady Hamlet once more felt that she could breathe again, when she no longer beheld the object of her fears before her, and without any mutual recognition of each other having passed between Lord Albert and Lady Adeline. Fresh hopes revived in her breast. She now ventured to address the former, in a tone of tremulous gentleness.

“ Shall we not walk about in the garden ? it is very hot here.” He started, looking at her as a man awakening from a dream ; and as he suffered himself to be led whither she would, he continued to muse in silence on all that had passed : then suddenly murmured, in a half-broken sentence,

“ I *will* see Adeline ; I *will* see her *to-morrow*.” Lady Hamlet knew too well from this what must be the purpose he was revolving, and the fervency of his still remaining attachment for Lady Adeline. An icy chill withered her heart as she thought of the possible result of that interview, which the words that had involuntarily escaped him too surely predicted. But, deeply skilled in the human heart, she did not attempt to say any thing to dissuade him at that moment from his purpose, nor did she venture to make any allusion whatever to Lady Adeline ; for she was well aware that all interference would not only be fruitless, but might hazard the very object nearest her heart. Besides, Lord Albert had never suffered himself to pronounce Lady Adeline’s name, even when, in the many conversations which he had held with Lady Hamlet Vernon, she had been covertly alluded to ; neither had Lady Hamlet Vernon dared openly to touch upon his attachment to Lady Adeline, since their first interview after the visit at Restormel, when in the fer-

vency of her feelings, and the plenitude of her despair, she said,

"Lady Adeline will never make you happy."

From the constrained and painful situation in which she now found herself placed, when silence was scarcely to be borne, and yet to break it was perilous, she was relieved by the approach of Mr. Spencer Newcomb, Lord Rainham, and Lord Glenmore; and, glad to arrest them by way of saying something, asked if they had seen Lady Glenmore.

"Yea," replied Lord Rainham. "I left her some time ago enjoying that most enviable amusement, which only demands strength of wind and limb, and spares all the wear and tear of brains that graver cares demand. I wish it were the fashion for men of my age to make *girouettes* and *pirouettes*, and cut *cartes*. Grown gentlemen are taught to dance, and I have long had serious thoughts of learning *incog.*"

"I hope you will let your intimate friends at least enjoy your first *début*," cried Mr. Spencer Newcomb. "But, after all, you know, Rainham, that *girouettes* and *pirouettes* belong equally to the dance of life as to the dance of the ball-room; and we are none of us quite ignorant of these, though some of us make them more gracefully than others."

Lord Rainham had a way of not hearing when it did not suit him to hear; and having no impromptu *fait à loisir* ready at that moment, by way of reply, he passed on, apparently insensible to the sting, which he was much better skilled in knowing how to inflict than how to receive.

"I think," said Lord Glenmore, "that at all events Georgina must have had enough of that enviable amusement, as Rainham calls it, by this time; and that if we do not go in quest of her, we shall not be together at supper." So saying, he sought her first among the dancers; but passed on, inquiring, as he went, if any one had seen her. Some replied one thing, some another; and many answered in a pointed manner, which, however, was unobserved by him, for it was contrary to Lord Glenmore's nature to entertain a doubt of those whom he once loved and esteemed. Being wearied of seeking Lady Glenmore, and concluding she had gone to the refreshment-room, he sat down by Lady Tendron, whose vanity was always gratified in every oppor-

tunity of keeping up the remembrance of a past juvenile gossip in the eyes of the world.

In the meanwhile, Lady Glenmore, who had been overcome by the heat of the ball-room, had been easily prevailed upon to seek the refreshing coolness of the terraces ; and having walked about some time, entered the conservatory, and sat down for a moment to inhale the perfume of the flowers and plants, and to enjoy the tranquillity it afforded from the noise and bustle of the dancers. Here Mr. Leslie Winyard beguiled the hour, and interested Lady Glenmore by reciting various passages from various poets, analogous to the spirit of the place, and then passing from these to the theme of such feelings as the lines he quoted were calculated to inspire. He dwelt with eloquence on the imperfection and little refinement of all attachments of the present day, expatiated on that homage which ought to be paid to woman, and which, as he spoke, he seemed to imply was willingly paid by himself to her.

There was an inebriating danger in this address, which Lady Glenmore was too young and too pure to see ; and she listened complacently and unsuspectingly to the perilous flattery, forgetting how the moments flew, and unconscious of the impropriety of her remaining so long absent from the general circle, and in a place so remote from observation. Nor was she aware of the appearance which might attach to her, till a whisper fell on her ear, and, startling, made her arise hastily from her seat. It proceeded from Lord Gascoigne and Lord Baskerville, who stood behind some orange trees.

“Basky,” said the latter, arresting his companion by the arm, “we are *de trop* here,” directing his attention to the spot where Lady Glenmore and Mr. Leslie Winward were.

“Upon my word,” replied Lord Baskerville, “this is a *hell to fit a* put together.”

“Hush !” said the latter, distinctly ; “let us be off : it is not fair.”

Lady Glenmore looked round, but saw no one : it aroused her, however, to a recollection of the length of time that she had been sitting there, and moving forward on the instant, she said,

“We must return to the ball room.”

Mr. Leslie Winyard would willingly have detained her,
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but he felt that it was injudicious to press her to remain when she seemed to have taken alarm ; and having himself heard the voices, which he believed to have occasioned Lady Glenmore's sudden departure, he was conscious that some curious intruders had witnessed the fact of his *tête-à-tête* ; and he consoled himself for its interruption with the idea that its fame would soon be spread abroad, and in colours far more glowing than the reality.

When Lady Glenmore returned to the ball room, she saw her husband in the midst of Lady Tenderden's *coterie*, enjoying that easy flow of spirits, which, tempered with elegance and refinement of fancy, marked peculiarly the charm of his society. As she approached, he arose and took her hand, and with an expression of pleasure drew her arm through his, as though he had found all that he wanted to complete his enjoyment of the pleasure of the scene. Lady Glenmore, too, seemed delighted ; while some of those who witnessed this meeting exchanged significant looks, and whispered remarks upon the cunning duplicity of the one, and the consummate *bonhomie* of the duped.

"It is the best thing," said Lord Baskerville, "that I have seen this many a day :" and by Lord Tonnerre, Lord Boileau, and the rest of that knot of persons, Lady Glenmore was pronounced to be the cleverest woman in the world, her husband the greatest fool, and Leslie Winyard the most fortunate of men.

All this while Lord Albert had been close at Lady Hamlet Vernon's side, mute, and apparently insensible to every thing around. Once only did Lady Adeline pass before him ; but he could not be deaf to the lavish encomiums he heard repeated on all sides, of the beauty and the grace of her who was to have been his own, but who was now lost to him, he feared, for ever ; and all these things, and the sad contrast of the past and of the present, aggravated the bitterness of his soul.

The last glimpse he caught of her was on her leaving the Priory, when she was leaning on the arm of Mr. Foley, accompanied by Lady Louisa Blithewaite. Her spirits, wound up for some time to a factitious spring, had given way at last, and she could no longer keep up the deception. Languid, inanimate, almost unable to stand, she thought that she had done all which Lady Dunmelraise could demand ;

and, under the plea of excessive fatigue, she easily prevailed on Lady Louisa Blithewaite not to await the end of the *fête*, but to return to town. The general homage she had received, and the very particular *dévouement* of the Duke of Mercington, might, under other circumstances, have been powerful stimulants to the vanity of any young mind; but one absorbing passion is the best *natural* preservative against the follies of the world, and the heartlessness of vanity; for the incense of flattery palls upon a heart that is deeply engaged, and which scorns all praise that is not uttered by the lips of the one object of its devotion.

Before Lady Adeline reached town, the morning light streaked the horizon; and she felt that this rising of day, with its accompaniment of vernal airs, and twittering birds, and sparkling dew-drops, and all the gladness of an awakened creation, were but a mocking contrast to the setting sun of her hopes, the mournful notes of sorrow which rung in her ears, and the deadness of that affection which she had once thought could suffer no diminution or decay. The chilling damp of disappointed love clung around her heart and withered every hope, rendering her wholly spiritless, and unable to converse; and when she arrived at Lady Dummelraise's door, she took a hasty leave of Lady Louisa Blithewaite, and stealing as noiselessly as she could to her apartment, she courted the silence of reflection; but not the calm of sleep.

CHAPTER XII.

LOVERS' ERRORS.

HAD Lord Albert d'Esterre been himself at the time, and not the victim of contending passions, he would have left the *fête* at Avington Priory the moment he had seen Lady Adeline depart. As it was, he remained; it cannot be supposed from any entertainment or delight that he had derived from the scene, but from that species of suffering which

renders *all* scenes alike ; and in the bitterness of his heart he even affected a gayety such as the poor maniac feels,

“With moody madness laughing wild
Amid severest wo.”

How many hearts are there in similar situations, whose gangrene wounds are festering at the core, while the mask of pleasure is painted on the face ! But there are few persons in the world who know us sufficiently, or think of us enough, to detect the assumed disguise ; and thus the wretched are numbered with the happy. Some few, however, there are, who, mingling in this cheating crowd, have yet their hopes and hearts anchored in a far different sphere, and pass through the infected mass, themselves unspotted, like Milton’s personification of Purity amid the crew of Comus.

These, with deep commiseration of spirit, penetrate the paint and varnish of deceptive pleasure, and, shuddering, see what waste they make of life who never look beyond it—losing, for its shadow, the sum and substance of true happiness. But *such as these* were not to be found in the circle in which Lord Albert moved. He had often, since his *entrainment* in that delusive scheme of existence in which he was involved, exclaimed, “I was not made for this !” The nobler, truer purposes of existence were still the inmates of his breast, but they were under a spell which he had no power to break : they were dead letter, and were in peril of becoming obsolete.

In this state of moral danger, had he confided to Lord Glenmore’s ear the contradictory feelings by which he was alternately swayed, in him Lord Albert would have found a true friend ; for he was not one of the many who pass by exultingly, in the pride, or indifference, or selfishness of their nature, and say, “ You, too, are happy,” careless of the reality, so long as the sunshine of their own amusement is not darkened by the sorrow they see another wear. No : Lord Glenmore would have not only commiserated, but counselled ; not only counselled, but aided. Alas ! we may suspect that, when we shrink from confiding our sorrows to a friend whom we know to be good and true, we are ourselves under some fatal delusion.

Lord Albert sought not to unbosom himself to Lord

Glenmore, from a latent feeling that he was himself in error ; and he had not had, for many a day, the courage, or rather the virtue, to probe his own conduct, but suffered the blindness of self-deception to gather like a cataract over his mental vision ; he acted under the consciousness that he was to blame, yet without sufficient energy to attempt to dispel the film, and look on things as they really were. It may seem matter of surprise that Lord Glenmore, who lacked not penetration, had not only spoken to his friend on the subject of his engagement with Lady Adeline : but while Lord Glenmore was happy himself, in that deep sense of the word in which it most imports us to be happy, the mazes of entanglement which gather around those who swerve from the path of rectitude entered not into his imagination. He had always pursued a straight-forward path, and truth and sincerity had given him a clue to pass through life without entering on any of those tortuous ways, such as now distracted his unhappy friend.

This clear moral light of action rendered him, in the present instance, blind to the conduct of Lord Albert ; and though the rumour was prevalent among the circle in which they lived, that his engagement with Lady Adeline was at an end, yet it had not reached Lord Glenmore's ear ; and even had it done so, perhaps, from ignorance of Lady Adeline's merits, he might have thought that his friend's affections would be better bestowed elsewhere ; but, at all events, he would have felt, that to mention the subject, while Lord Albert had made no allusion to it himself, would have been an indelicacy on his part.

Thus was the former, from his own want of confidence, deprived of the only counsellor who might, by a word, have dispelled the mist of error which surrounded him ; and by assisting Lord Albert to recover his self-esteem, have restored him to a happiness which was now eluding his grasp, if it had not already done so. Experience, however, must be bought. There is an ordeal to be passed through by every one. Happy are those who are purified seven times in the fire, and come forth humbled and ameliorated !

However much Lord Albert's sufferings might have been unnoticed by the general eye, there was one who read his soul's secret but too plainly. Lady Hamlet Vernon saw through the veil of the false gayety and forced spirits which he assumed ; and again and again felt, with an impassioned

woman's feelings, that the hour was come which was to decide her fate.

On the night, or rather morning, when the festivities of Avington Park were ended—when the last lingering foot-steps of the votaries of pleasure passed away, satiated but not satisfied with the very continuance of that diversion which for ever demands fresh food to feed its sickly appetite, although it palls upon the aliment it craves—Lord Albert could no longer drown his senses in the hum and glitter of the gay crowd; and having handed Lady Hamlet Vernon to her carriage, sought his own. And there once more alone, with a perfect abstraction of mind he threw himself back, and, covering his face with his hands, shuddered at the broad blue light of day, which seemed, in its pure serenity, to mock the dark turbulence of his stormy thoughts; but he could not shut out the beam of conscience, before whose searching ray the light and darkness are both alike.

His pillow brought no repose, and he felt glad when the hour came which called him to attend the routine of his official situation. Distasteful as the occupation was become, harassed and preoccupied as were his thoughts, he went through the duties it imposed with his usual precision and power; and found, what every one will find, that duties, however dry, when they are strictly fulfilled, bring a palliative to suffering, and act as correctives of evil. It must be allowed, however, that it is a great prerogative which men enjoy over women, in experiencing, from the very nature of the employments which generally devolve on them, a relief that strengthens and invigorates, while those of women bear them invariably back to the very source and centre of their sorrows, and awaken all the enfeebling tenderness of the heart. But neither should this create a spirit of repining. Doubtless, every one who seeks for strength where alone it can be found will not seek in vain; and the feeble may become strong when they place their trust aright.

Lord Albert d'Esterre, having finished the business of the day, was enabled with more calmness to meet the pain which he expected would attend his visit in South Audley-street, whither he went to seek an explanation from Lady Dunmelraise and Lady Adeline. As he crossed Piccadilly from St. James's, with the intention of avoiding the throng of Hyde Park, and as he was turning into a street leading

more directly to the point whither he was going, Lady Hamlet Vernon's carriage passed him. She looked out of the window, at the same time kissing her hand as though she wished him to stop ; but returning her salute, he passed on. Still there was something peculiar in her expression which did not escape his observation. It spoke a triumph, of which, had he known the cause, it would have proved an antidote to the misery that was in store for him ; for in that case he would, under every circumstance, have persevered in his determination of obtaining an explanation from Lady Adeline in person.

When arrived at the well-known door of Lady Dunmelraise, he waited with impatience for its opening, but no one came. He desired his servant to knock again ; and looking up, he perceived the windows were open, and maid-servants passing to and fro in the rooms with an air of unusual bustle, which made him shudder, although he knew not why. At the same moment, the porter opened the door, and informed him that Lady Dunmelraise and Lady Adeline had left town a few hours before. He was for a moment mute with astonishment. "Lest town!" he exclaimed ; "for how long?"

"I really do not know, my lord."

"When do you expect their return?"

"Not this year," was the reply : "at least, we have received no orders to lead us to suppose my lady is coming back ; but, on the contrary, we have directions to take down the furniture."

"This is unaccountable!" ejaculated Lord Albert, with a movement of mingled indignation and grief. "Where is Lady Dunmelraise gone?" he asked, after another pause.

"To Dunmelraise, I believe, my lord."

Lord Albert continued to sit on his horse mechanically for some minutes, as if wholly unable to collect his thoughts, or to believe the truth of what the servant said. Again and again he asked the same questions, and invariably received the same answers, till there was no longer any doubt of the fact ; and then in broken sentences he said, unconscious that he spoke aloud,—"It is too true, too evident—unnecessary!—unworthy!"

"My lord?" said his groom, thinking he addressed him.

"Nothing, James, nothing," he said, starting from his

reverie ; and suffering his horse to choose its own direction, he allowed the reins to lie heedlessly on its neck ; and then, again, actuated by a change of impulse, he urged it to its speed, dashing rapidly through the streets ; when some of his acquaintance, who saw him as he passed, observed, "D'Esterre is certainly quite mad ; I always thought so." And thus he continued his way homeward, now riding furiously, now creeping along, as the wayward mood of the moment directed, till he found himself at his own door ; and then, flinging himself from his horse, he rushed to his apartment, forbidding all interruption. Lord Albert's servants, who were exceedingly attached to him, looked aghast at his altered demeanour, and marvelled what had befallen their master.

No sooner was he alone, than he paced the room in all directions, uttering broken sentences of, "Gone—gone—not to return!—without one word of farewell!" Then he cast himself first into one chair, then into another, then rose abruptly, and striking his forehead, cried, "It is so. The die is cast, and all is over. But I will write to Lady Dunmelraise.—No ; rather I will go myself to her. I will upbraid her duplicity, and shame Adeline for this unworthy conduct." Then again, sinking into a calmer mood, but one of deeper anguish, he said, "It is too plain, it is too evident. Why should I seek that which I know already? No, no," he added, with a bitter smile, "Adeline shall not have it in her power to say that I was the first to break our engagement. Lady Dunmelraise shall not avail herself of any precipitation on my part, to dissolve a tie which she wishes broken, but knows not how to break. Adeline shall herself give me my dismissal ; for *it is* Adeline who has coldly, cruelly, and shamelessly cast me off." Here he felt a check. There was a sort of echo that gave back the sentence in mockery to his ear. "Adeline has cast *me* off," seemed repeated in bitter derision. There are words and circumstances which occur in the life of every one, when something more than the usual meaning of the one, or the common import of the other, appears to attach a consequence to them beyond their own individual value. So strongly did this feeling come over Lord Albert at the present moment, as he referred all blame to Lady Adeline, that a sudden revulsion of sensation rendered his mind a chaos.

Still his unwillingness to acknowledge himself in fault made him recall every trivial occurrence which could confirm his jealous doubts, and dwell on these till he again persuaded himself that he was the innocent and aggrieved person.

Mastered by this false impression, he determined to remain silent, and await his expected dismissal. "Then," he said, "then will be the time for me to speak of my wrongs." His mind was turbulent and gloomy all that day; but when the evening came, he habitually sought the circle in which he had been too much accustomed of late to pass his time, and which had become necessary to him. As Lady Tilney had a *soirée*, he drove to her house; and in this routine of what is termed pleasure he courted and found that torpor of reflection which it is its peculiar and baneful property to produce.

Lady Hamlet Vernon, who had heard from Mr. Foley of Lady Dunmelraise's sudden departure, and who felt like one snatched from the perilous brink of an abyss on receiving the intelligence, was now once more enabled to put forth all her fascinations; and on that evening devoted herself, with successful ardour, to the task of engaging Lord Albert's attention, and diverting his mind from painful retrospection. With all a woman's wiles, she suited her discourse to his taste; and, without too much or too little display, brought her varied talents into view, not as though they were *her own*, but merely the reflection caught from Lord Albert's; existing but *through* him and *for* him; by him to be fostered and improved, or by him to be crushed and dissolved, at pleasure.

Who but a woman can enter into this refinement of enchantment? Who but a woman can glory in being a slave? The effect Lady Hamlet Vernon produced on Lord Albert this evening was that of a lulling spell; an influence which she always possessed in greater degree, in proportion to the racking doubts and anxieties under which he laboured, and which rendered him the easier prey to her seducing arts. When he parted from her, accordingly, on that evening, he felt grateful for the solace which her friendship and devotion seemed invariably to afford. False and unstable as was its basis, he leaned on it with mistaken confidence; for he had plunged into the deceptive sea of error, and was doomed to

be the sport of every incidental circumstance that floated on the surface of his affections.

On the following morning, his cruel, unjust opinions of Lady Dunmelraise and her daughter were confirmed, upon reading in the newspapers an announcement of Lady Dunmelraise's having left town, accompanied by a remark, in the usual language of similar information, that it was understood the lovely Lady Adeline was soon to be led to the hymeneal altar by Mr. George Foley. He cast down the paper with a feeling of sickness at his heart, which again gave way to a sense of deep injury; and then once more was renewed the determination to clear up the question by a direct application to Lady Dunmelraise: but the false pride of wounded feelings, offended honour, indignation at being deceived, and all the minor concomitants of self-love, brought back the tide of error which swept his thoughts into another channel, and with the sullen gloom of despair he finally said, "No; the issue of this strife must soon come of itself: let it come: it shall neither be retarded nor hastened by me."

While Lord Albert was thus suffering the penalty of his own mistaken, erring conduct, Lady Adeline's sufferings had not been less painfully acute; with this only difference, that self-reproach had never torn her breast; and agonizing as were her feelings on the morning when she returned from Avington Priory, they were enviable in comparison with those which racked his heart. Lady Dunmelraise had given orders, the previous evening, that her daughter should not be disturbed on the following day; concluding that the fatigue of the *féte* would be to her doubly trying, and that she would require a long and complete rest. She was much surprised, therefore, when she came to breakfast, to find Lady Adeline awaiting her. Her countenance and air at once told a melancholy truth to Lady Dunmelraise; and she felt not only that rest had been a stranger to her, but that some more decided event, and more painful than any which had yet befallen her, must have occurred, to have, in so brief a space, effected such ravages on her youth and bloom. Nor did she remain long in ignorance of this so sudden change; for Lady Adeline, meeting her mother's embrace, with many convulsive sobs breathed out her entreaty to be taken immediately from London, and to be

spared her being called upon to witness any more of those agonizing scenes, such as she had been exposed to at Avington Priory.

"I have done enough, I have done enough, dearest mamma," she exclaimed, "to show Albert an indifference which I never can really feel towards him; and you will not, I am sure, condemn your poor child to any more similar trials." She then detailed to Lady Dunmelraise the particulars of the last night's occurrences, who saw too plainly, and shuddered as she saw, that this strife of suppressed feeling had shaken the frame of her child, and not only blighted her happiness, but endangered her very existence.

"My sweet Adeline," said Lady Dunmelraise, with the tenderest earnestness, "would that I could as easily take all sorrow from you as I can now comply with this your request! You shall no longer endure a protracted stay here: we will leave town directly."

Lady Adeline knew her mother's heart, and doubted not of her acquiescence in her wishes; but there was a manner of feeling *with* her at the moment, which was grateful to her wounded heart beyond the mere act of compliance; and as she wept on her mother's shoulder, she said,

"I am an unthankful being to feel unhappy when I have such a parent." Lady Dunmelraise kissed away her tears; and having done all in her power to sooth, left her with the secret intention to arrange their immediate departure. Scarcely was Lady Adeline alone, than she looked fearfully around, as though the very precincts of the room upbraided her for going away, and as though she had voluntarily sought to take a step which was for ever to part her from Lord Albert.

An icy coldness clung round her heart, as she gazed again and again at the walls of the apartment, and in every article of their decoration recognised some trace of him she loved. She murmured inwardly, "Even where his shadow fell, the senseless wall recalls all my grief; for though it left no trace upon the spot on which it passed, what can efface the reflection of his image from my heart?

"Can it be," she went on to say, "that so short a time ago I entered this house, elated with hope and delight at the idea of meeting him? can it be that he should have appeared

inspired with the same feelings as myself, and then, without any reason, so cruelly, so heartlessly desert me ? I think I could have better borne this sorrow, had he only confided in me as a friend. Yes, had he but told me the truth, I might have mourned in secret ; but I never should have wept for him as I do now in bitterness of heart, to think that I have so loved an object unworthy of my esteem."

Alas ! when we are in sorrow, we fancy any other grief would be easier endured than that which weighs us down : but we judge erroneously. Sorrows spring not out of the ground ; and it is knowing how to suffer the scourge under which we smart that can alone bring us any alleviation. There are few persons, so young as Lady Adeline, with feelings as finely strung, who are so well prepared to meet with trial ; yet still poor human nature is in its best estate a mart for sorrows ; and those are happiest who soonest learn to barter the bright, delusive hopes of youth for the sober, subdued views of real life, which, without producing a distaste for this world's enjoyments, despoil them of that vivid colouring which cannot last, and detaches them from considering it as their abiding place.

Such was the lesson now taught to Lady Adeline, as she was called, with unexpected haste, to quit South Audley-street ; and she cast a last hurried glance at the chair where he had sat, who was still her heart's idol, at the carpet on which he had trod, the book he had opened, and lastly, the picture, the image dearer than all except himself, which she now left for the first and last time, as no longer worthy to be her companion. Notwithstanding the abruptness with which she was snatched from these melancholy contemplations, and the revulsion of feelings which her sudden farewell to these cherished objects occasioned, Lady Adeline, after a few hours' reflection, acknowledged that the promptness of Lady Dunmelraise's decision had been made in kindness, and that the blow which was to sever her from him she most loved, if it were inevitable, were best to fall suddenly.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN AWKWARD DILEMMA.

THE *fête* at Avington Priory afforded a theme of conversation, if such a term is not inapplicable to such a subject, of much longer duration than was usual ; for in the existence of those who were actors in the scene, or participators in its pleasures, one folly generally succeeded another so quickly as to chase away all remembrance of its immediate predecessor. Perhaps, too, in this instance, more interest was experienced in the discussion of the entertainment, from the zest which some signal *esclandres* gave to it, and which were generally whispered about ; particularly that in which Lady Glenmore's and Mr. Leslie Winyard's names were involved.

Of this report, Lord Baskerville and Lord Gascoigne were the active propagators ; and which, corroborated by the condemning facts they themselves had witnessed, led those who listened to the conclusion that the matter was *une affaire décidée*. The only question then was, whether it was well or ill arranged ; for in all things the creed of these parties taught them to estimate the *manner* of an action without any reference to its morality. Opinions were given respecting the good or bad taste of the thing ; and speculation ran high how Glenmore would take it. However far from the truth, or unjust, these conclusions and opinions might in reality be, it cannot be denied that Lady Glenmore had in some measure afforded subject of conversation to the licentious and censorious tongues of these traducers, by permitting the very marked and exclusive attentions of Mr. Leslie Winyard in society ; and, in doing so, justified an apprehension which the most candid and the most kind observer (if any such had been there as a witness) could not but feel, that she must inevitably fall a victim to a man of Leslie Winyard's character, unless some powerful hand snatched her from the peril.

In the example of Lady Glenmore's present danger, the mischiefs arising out of the system of the society in which she lived are painfully apparent ; and although they have more than once been dwelt upon, yet, with the object of unmasking a disguised evil, they cannot be too frequently alluded to or minutely detailed. Nor can the observation be too often repeated, that such dangers must unavoidably accrue to the young and inexperienced while receiving none of those salutary checks which are afforded them in a society differently organized, and where the ties of families, and the counsel and protection of sincere friends, are *not* sacrificed to the laws and rules of exclusive fashion.

Lady Glenmore's absence, it might almost be called alienation, from Lord and Lady Melcomb and the bosom of her own family, had been so gradual as scarcely to be perceptible. Had it been otherwise, she would have recoiled from the idea, and her excellent heart would have sufficed to guard her from so unnatural a fault ; but the evil grew out of the circumstances in which she was placed, and increased without any appearance which could awaken a suspicion of its real tendency. She did not go to-day to Lady Melcomb, because Lady Tenderden, or Lady Tilney, or some other of her friends, had prevented her at the very moment she was stepping into her carriage ; but she would go to-morrow : and when to-morrow came, fatigued with the ball, or the assembly of the preceding evening, she did not rise till at so late an hour, that Lady Melcomb would be out, and it was in vain for her to go. When the evening in its turn came round, then some ceremonious diplomatic dinner, followed by the *soirées* of the different members of her *coterie*, equally precluded her from fulfilling this duty.

Thus one day passed on after another, and the rare and short visit to her parents, when it was paid, afforded no real communion of heart or thought. Yet all this happened not wilfully, not in positive indifference, or forgetfulness of natural affection, but arose, as it were, unavoidably, out of the life she led. Let it not excite surprise that this alienation had been productive of no alarm in the tender and affectionate hearts of Lord and Lady Melcomb. They, indeed, saw less of their daughter than they wished ; but though they sometimes sighed over the "angel visits, few and far between," of their estranged child, still, in the indulgent

fondness of their hearts, perhaps too in a mistaken pride, they found an excuse for her constantly living in a round of dissipation, partly from the pomp and circumstance attendant on the public situation which her husband held, and partly from thinking it natural that one so young, and gifted with external graces, should indulge in the pleasures that courted her on all sides:

Another cause, too, existed, to render their separation an apparent consequence of her marriage. Lord and Lady Melcomb had not lived at any time on terms of intimacy with that circle which now exclusively formed their daughter's and Lord Glenmore's society ; and a further barrier by this means stood between their meeting ; but it was one which, if natural feelings had been allowed their proper influence, and had any advance been made to Lord and Lady Melcomb, on the part of those persons, towards their acquaintance, might easily have been removed.

In this case, for their daughter's sake, they would readily have met any advance, and in order to do so, have stepped out of their own habitual line of society ; a society founded on the dignified principles of high rank, and the rational grounds of real social happiness : but they were the last persons to court an intimacy where a mutual desire was not expressed for its formation ; and the question, however painful, as it affected their natural intercourse with their child, was not, however, one which gave rise to any seriously uneasy feelings. When they did see her, they saw her so fondly attached to her husband, and so happy, what could they fear for her ? It would almost have seemed like a selfish apprehension, to have indulged any doubts regarding her future welfare.

Their own course through life had been one perpetual gleam of sunshine, a circumstance which is apt to render us more blind to the possibility of evil, than when we have been exercised in the school of adversity ; that school by which we are alone perfected, and without whose salutary discipline the false security is indulged, that "*to-morrow will be as to-day, and even more abundant,*" and we dread no check to our earthly career.

How fearful is this species of happiness, which, resting on itself, forgets the hand by which it is alone upheld ! Could Lord and Lady Melcomb have seen through this de-

lusion—could they have guessed that their child stood at the moral point where the two paths separate which lead to virtue or to vice, and where the traveller in the road of life, according as he makes his choice, will be admitted in the end to misery or happiness—they would have performed their duty as parents unhesitatingly ; they would have pointed out to their child the excellence of the one course, and have warned her of the inevitable ruin and degradation attendant on the other. As to the current reports of the day, they were the last to hear them, as is usually the case with those most concerned ; and in this respect Lord Glenmore was removed still further from a knowledge of the truth. Lady Glenmore, deprived of her natural and true guides, surrounded by persons whose lives were, generally speaking, characterized by the same errors, on the brink of which she now hung, and who, if they looked on such conduct as error, held it in a very venial light even when detected, and as nothing, if it evaded open discovery, had little chance of receiving any counsel in time to save her.

Speaking thus of Lady Glenmore, it must not be supposed that she viewed her own conduct and career in its true light, or that she erred from any determination to err, or even from being led away by any impulse of passion ; far from it. The innocence of her nature, her domestic habits and education, as well as her attachment to her husband, had in the first instance rendered her present mode of life distasteful. But it is the very property of the subtle poison of that atmosphere in which she lived and breathed to pollute the healthful springs of being, till the moral taste becomes less and less acute, and is at length wholly corrupted, leaving the mind totally unable to discriminate between right and wrong.

Although, with the young men who lived in the same society, the event of the downfall of her reputation was looked upon as a thing of course, and hailed, in their licentiousness of spirit, as a matter of congratulation, since it would level another victim to their standard, still there were others of the *coterie*, who, from motives of policy, were anxious that no further *esclandre* should take place, than that which had already arisen on the subject, to call forth the loud reprobation of a public whom they at once feared and despised, and whose opinions, though they set them at defiance, they

in reality wished not to brave unnecessarily : for in the instance of Lady Glenmore, the destruction of so much happiness as was supposed to have centred in her union would be likely to create proportionate abhorrence and condemnation of a system of society which had been the occasion of it, and lead to a sifting and exposure of the principle and motives on which that system was based.

Lady Tilney was the first person whose acuteness and vigilance despaired the danger ; and was impelled to attempt an arrangement of the business, as well from her general love of managing every body and every thing, as from the more weighty reason attached to it. Being perfectly aware of Lady Glenmore's character, she dreaded lest an affair which, in the hands of a woman of tact, might have been managed without any *éclat*, would with her be precipitated to a point which must end in an exposure. She felt, however, that to speak to Lady Glenmore openly would be to commit herself with a person whose want of discretion was the chief ground of her apprehensions respecting her ; and therefore, after much reflection, she determined to seek the assistance of Lady Tenderden in the business, and employ her in its management, as being more intimate with the parties than she herself was.

It was not the first time that Lady Tilney had availed herself of an intermediate hand to work out a favourite undertaking. With this view, some ten days after the *fête* at Avington Priory, and when the whole affair was openly spoken of throughout their circle, Lady Tilney sought an opportunity of communicating her views to Lady Tenderden ; and having denied herself to every one else, they were soon in deep conference in the *boudoir*.

" Dear Lady Tenderden," said the former, addressing her, " I am sure that I may speak to you in confidence on a subject in which you will feel an equal if not greater interest than myself : I allude to our *élève*, *la petite* Georgina. This is a very silly affair of hers with Leslie Winyard, and is going too far : don't you think so ?" Lady Tenderden gave no direct answer.

" Surely you must allow that she is not the *sort* of person to risk any hazards, or to manage this kind of affair well or with prudence. If allowed to go on by herself, she will run headlong down the precipice, and no earthly power can save

her. Besides, it would be a terrible thing *for us*, if there was any public scandal to ensue. Consider, my dear Lady Tenderden, we should all incur some portion of blame, and *she* would be pitied ; while we should have all those persons whom we have banished without the pale of our society railing against *us*, and our system, as though it were a *lazzaretto* in which all the plagues of Egypt were assembled. Now, though we know how false this is, still we ought to provide against it."

Lady Tenderden nodded assent as Lady Tilney went on : — " You agree with me, I am sure ; for the curious and disappointed will not judge *coolly*, and we must try to shelter ourselves from their imputations, however groundless. We ought to move on in a sphere out of the general nature of things ; but, in order to do this *impénément*, it is necessary to be vigilant and prudent ; and I assure you I am never off the watch."

" *Peut-être* ; but den *how* would you do in this instance ?"

" Ah ! there lies the delicacy ; in that *how* consists the difficulty of the business ; for you know, as to *la petite personne* herself, we cannot with any safety *compromettre* ourselves by speaking to her on this subject. She is one of those innocent persons who would, I am sure, either start off at the bare mention of any *liaison*, and would make a great fuss, and a *scene* which might be very unpleasant to us all in a thousand ways ; or else she might give *tête baissé* into the thing, so much the more from being warned against it, as your meek people always do ; and, though not discreet, she has cunning enough to keep it strictly till the moment when she steps into the carriage which is to take her from her disconsolate husband."

" *Peut-être*," was again Lady Tenderden's brief reply.

Lady Tilney proceeded. " Now, I think there is one, and only one way in which it can be managed : and your assistance will be vitally important for its success."

" Oh, *de graces* ! do not involve me in any of dese troublesome rôles : I am not at all *de personne* to play dem well ; and *l'inconduite de la petite en question* makes me quite *friasomé* to think of any thing of the kind."

" Oh ! but, my dear Lady Tenderden, for Glenmore's sake, you know, for all our sakes, you will not let this affair terminate as it *must* do if something is not done to put it on

a right footing ? you will surely not let the *scandale* of such a commonplace *dénouement* attach to our society, as the infallible issue of the affair must cause, unless we attempt to save appearances, and settle *marche du jeu* in *better taste* at least ?”

Lady Tenderden’s countenance relaxed, as if she was pleased at the idea of holding an influence over Lord Glenmore ; and Lady Tilney was satisfied that she had done wisely in condescending to flatter her *amour propre*, by confessing herself secondary in influence ; a point which she was never very willing to yield : but she felt it was the surest way to proceed to secure Lady Tenderden’s co-operation, and proceeded to say,

“ Now listen, I entreat you, to what I have to propose ; and if you do not approve my idea, then suggest something better. The only thing that remains to be done, in my opinion, then,” continued Lady Tilney, “ is to get Georgina out of England. You know Glenmore cannot move ; but that is no reason why *she* may not be absent for a few months. The advantage of your company, her health, a thousand excuses may be found : and if she is not as deeply involved as we suspect with Winyard, *this* will break off the affair ; while, if she is, absence, and distance, and the chances of time and place, *que sais-je enfin* — a million things may turn away the tide of observation from us ; at all events, the *éclat* will be less offensive abroad than at home. Now could you not propose to her a little tour to Spa, or *Les Eaux de Barèges*, when the season comes round for leaving London ?”

Lady Tenderden seemed half inclined to acquiesce, but, like most people who make sudden changes of opinion, she did not know exactly how to give as ready an assent as she was willing in her heart to do ; while at the same time, there was a little demur at the idea of being made the tool of Lady Tilney, as well as of being mixed up in an affair in which, if it ended wrong, she would regret to have been implicated.

Lady Tilney’s flattery and persuasive reasonings, however, as was generally the case when she had a favourite point to carry, prevailed ; and the conversation ended with an arrangement, that Lady Tenderden should, in the course of a few days, open the subject to Lady Glenmore, and put it *en train*.

Although the solicitude of the polite Lady Tilney for the fate of her young *élève* might have been premature as to the

precise degree of her *liaison* with Mr. Leslie Winyard, still if it had been entertained on a better principle than that of mere expediency, it would have been amiable and justifiable ; for when a married woman's name is once connected with that of any man in particular, there is an immediate taint on her character, which, while it is degrading to herself, attaches to her husband the character of dupe, or something worse, and affords an example to others, productive of almost as much evil as would accrue from actual guilt.

There are very few women on whom this stain is cast, who could, like the youthful Lady Glenmore, plead perfect innocence of intention ; but she had been, almost at the outset of her marriage, thrown alone in the midst of the most dangerous class of the most dangerous society of London. She had not certainly to complain that Lord Glenmore had wilfully deserted or neglected her : his absence was a necessary consequence of the duties he had taken upon himself in his public career.

While, however, she acknowledged this, she could not but feel and mourn over his absence with childish simplicity of tenderness : and when at last, partly from necessity, and partly from the various arts used to wean her from this innocent love, she felt, as it was natural she should feel, considering that no very strong principle of religion had been instilled into her mind, or given stability to her character, that there could be no impropriety in having recourse to the pleasures and pursuits of fashion—pleasures which pertained to her situation, and were not only sanctioned, but encouraged by her husband—still, in doing this, it was not in her nature to aspire to any leading part, or to take any particular station, in the circle in which she moved. Had it been so,—had she been, in short, more worldly,—her conduct would have been more measured, more under the control of appearances ; and though she would not have had so much real virtue, she would better have known how to preserve its semblance. But as it was, the object sought by her in the maze of pleasure was simply an indemnification for her husband's absence : and not possessing a mind stored by solid instruction, or gifted with strong judgment, amiable, pliant, and fond, she entered on this perilous career without one of those qualities which might have enabled her to steer her course with safety.

Thus exposed, she risked becoming the victim of any designing persons who found it their amusement or their interest to render her the subject of licentious animadversion. Where almost every event, as in the kind of life described, bears some analogy, little variety occurs to mark the progress of time. One intrigue resembles another; one slander is like its neighbour; one *soirée* is a specimen of all: and unless, indeed, some defiance of morality more glaring than usual, some solecism in a marriage or a ball, a death or a breakfast, take place, there is little for the chronicler of the system to register in his page.

Ministers had looked forward to rest after the burthen of the session; the nobles had gone to their country seats to enjoy the beauties of the "sere and yellow leaf," there to renew the dissipation of the town. Hither, too, the invited *intrigant* had followed the object of his present pursuit, to tell in shady bowers the tale, so often told before to others, of treacherous love; while the sportsman, with more open and more honest if not nobler aim, hied him to moors and highlands in pursuit of his ruling passion.

If, during the last moments of the waning season, nothing of stronger character had occurred, on Lady Glenmore's and Mr. Leslie Winyard's part, to attract the particular notice of the circle in which their *liaison* was matter of conversation, still there was no relaxation of *his* attentions, or of *her* apparent preference, to justify the belief that he had relinquished his pursuit, or that she had discarded him.

Lady Tilney, therefore, continually urged Lady Tenderden to the necessity of adopting the measures she had proposed; and the latter, having satisfied herself that no unpleasant responsibility was likely to attach to her, consented to fill the allotted part in the measure, and propose to Lady Glenmore to accompany her on a tour.

"What do you do with yourself this summer?" said Lady Tenderden to the latter, as she was sitting *tête-à-tête* with her one morning.

"Indeed I do not in the least know what are Glenmore's plans; but I should hope we shall go to the country somewhere, for I begin to feel that my health suffers from the racket of a town-life. But whatever *he* chooses I shall like best, for nothing would do me any good if he were not to be of the party."

“Oh ! quelle enfantillage ! Well ! I hoped you had chased away that bad habit of being always in de leading-string. What ! *you* a minister's wife, and suppose that he is to follow you up *stair* and down *stair en nourrisson* all your life ! My dear, how would de state be taken care of after this fashion ?”

“True,” said Lady Glenmore, sighing, “and I am now used to be alone.” In fact, Lady Tenderden knew that these words were uttered more from habit than from feeling them in the painful degree in which they would once have been spoken ; and she replied,

“Well then, my dear ladi, *il faut prendre son partie* ; and since it is impossible you should have him always *à vos trousses*, what think you of making a little excursion with me to *Les Eaux de Barèges*, or to Spa, for two or three months in the *belle saison*? This would, I should think, exactly suit you : it will refresh your beauty, refit your *toilette*, et vous reviendrez entièrement renouvelée. *On se ressent de la fumée de Londres*. It is quite necessary to go away ; and a *villesgiatura* in England is so dull !”

“What, go abroad !” said Lady Glenmore, with unfeigned surprise.

“*Vous êtes impayable*,” rejoined Lady Tenderden, “comme j'ai souvent eu l'honneur de vous dire. One would imagine you lived a hundred years ago, when people talked of going abroad as they would of going to the moon ;—but now, abroad is at home. *Allons !* I will not allow you to hesitate. Leave me to settle the matter with Gleamore. I will arrange every thing ; and he shall come and meet you, and bring you home, in case I choose to pass the winter at Paris.”

Lady Glenmore had not the least idea that her husband would think of consenting to this proposal, but gave a sort of half acquiescence, more to escape from Lady Tenderden's persecuting entreaties, than from any wish to realize the scheme ; and she was quite astonished, some days afterward, to find Lord Glenmore of opinion that this plan would be the pleasantest thing in the world for her, the best adapted to recruit her health, and in all ways the most eligible. Half grieved at the thoughts of absence from him, half gratified at his eager desire to procure her a pleasure, and persuaded at length by his solicitation to try the remedy of

change of air for the languor which had of late affected her naturally good constitution,—the wish too of yielding implicit obedience to his will,—all combined to determine her to consent ; and she finally agreed to the proposed excursion, which was soon followed by preparations and arrangements for their departure to Barèges.

CHAPTER XIV.

MARRIAGE MANOEUVRES.

WHILE events thus intimately connected with Lady Glenmore's happiness were silently progressing, Lord Albert d'Esterre's mind was engrossed and torn by a thousand contending feelings of a nature wholly different, but not less fatally destructive of his peace. After recovering from the violence of the first shock which Lady Dunmelraise's sudden departure had occasioned, he had remained torpid and incapable of action : then again, inwardly harassed by the most lively anxiety, he had awaited, with an agony of suspense which none can know, save those who have experienced how “hope deferred maketh the heart sick,” the communication which he felt Lady Dunmelraise could not possibly long delay, relative to Lady Adeline.

During each of the four-and-twenty hours which had passed since the blow had fallen on him, Lord Albert had thus been the victim of one contradictory passion or other ; but still, in the alternate storm or lull of his emotions, he had mechanically sought the society of the only person in the world whom he now believed entered into his feelings, or took any real interest in his fate. It may be readily supposed that Lady Hamlet Vernon did not lose the advantage which this undivided share of his time afforded her ; and she found means, even in the state of apathy in which Lord Albert seemed plunged, and during the lengthened silence to which, at intervals, he gave way even in her presence, to impress him, by a thousand attentions, with a sense of the deep sympathy she felt in all his sufferings. At the same

time she knew the wound that rankled at his heart was yet too recent to be rudely touched, and the paroxysm of his malady too violent to bear those remedies which, with the skilful and tender solicitude of one who watches a patient on the bed of sickness, she awaited a favourable moment to administer, but forced not injudiciously upon his acceptance.

With one exception only, no event occurred, no word was spoken, no circumstance had been alluded to, that could in the remotest degree bring forward the dreaded name of Lady Adeline. When, however, Lord Albert heard, accidentally, at Lady Hamlet Vernon's, that Mr. Foley had also left town a few days after Lady Dunmelraise, his feelings were roused to a pitch that nearly decided him on hastening to Dunmelraise in person. Nor is it probable, notwithstanding Lord Albert's former resolves, that he would longer have hesitated to take this step, had he not been assured, in the most pointed and positive manner, by Lady Hamlet herself (who foresaw and dreaded the effect of this natural impulse), that Mr. Foley had *not* followed Lady Adeline, but was gone on a visit to some other part of the country.

This intelligence again changed the current of his feelings, and for the moment he was lulled into security, that while his rival appeared not in Adeline's presence, she would have leisure and freedom of mind to reflect and repent of the cruelty of her behaviour towards himself; and vainly imagined that there was a better hope in leaving her to the workings of her own heart, than by giving way to any reproaches which he might have made.

Thus he lost the only chance that remained to him, of avoiding the blow which was so soon to annihilate all hope. It was a fortnight after Lady Adeline's leaving London, that the post brought him a letter, at the sight of the well-known characters of which he trembled; for with one glance he recognised them to be the handwriting of Lady Dunmelraise. He knew that that letter must be the arbiter of his fate, that it must lead to an explanation; and he felt that no explanations were likely to prove happy ones. For a few moments he held the letter in his hand, dreading to break the seal, for he was aware that it was the messenger which was either to condemn him to the loss of Adeline,

or give him the power to seek her as his wife; and, of the latter, something within his breast forbade the hope. At length he slowly tore open the paper, and, with gasping eagerness, read as follows :

“ My dear Lord Albert d’Esterre,

“ The period which was to decide the fulfilment of the wishes entertained by Lord Tresyllian and the late Lord Dunmeleraise respecting yourself and Lady Adeline has at length arrived. Wishes of this kind, however, are unfortunately too often subject to the same changes which attend on every thing earthly ; and it would be weak, therefore, as well as wrong, to lament over them when unrealized ; still less should we do so, when their accomplishment no longer appears to hold out that prospect of felicity which, in the present instance, I am certain, was the only motive for their first indulgence. I need not, my lord, enter upon the reasons which have induced my daughter to resign the honour of an alliance with your house ; they will naturally suggest themselves to your own heart ; and if they do not do this, I consider an explanation of them would be an intrusion on my part, of which I should be sorry to be guilty.

“ I remain, my dear Lord Albert d’Esterre,

“ Your very faithful and obedient

“ ELIZA DUNMELERAISE.

“ P.S. I forward a copy of my letter to Lord Tresyllian by this post.”

“ It is then as I thought,” exclaimed Lord Albert. “ Faithless, treacherous, cold-hearted Adeline ! why did I ever love you ? why place my happiness on so frail, so unworthy a tenure ! But it is well, it is better thus.— Since I have now no cause to mourn your loss, I will not suffer grief for such an object to master me. It is well that you are lost to me. Lost !”—he started at the sound, as he repeated, “ Yes, lost to me for ever !” and his lip trembled, while a sense of suffocation oppressed and over-powered him, and tears, burning tears, burst from his eyes. Not softly, not refreshingly, did they flow, but like the lava’s flood, which seathes the path down which it courses. For two days and two nights Lord Albert remained in the most

pitable state of mind. He would see no one, for to whom could he unburthen his griefs ? and not to speak of them was impossible : to whom would he deign to show his lacerated heart ? yet to what other subject than that by which it was torn could he give utterance ?

The necessity of replying to Lady Dunmelraise's letter was the first thing that aroused him from this lethargy of sorrow ; but when he essayed the task, he found it one of no easy nature. He read and *re-read* the letter ; he endeavoured to extract from it some gleam of hope, some opening of possible change ; but it was so calm, so cuttingly and despairingly reasonable, so dignified yet so decided in its tone, so meek yet so authoritative, that he felt it pronounced a verdict which admitted of no appeal.

" Be it so," he said, with the composure of despair ; " but, at least, I too will speak my mind. Yet how ? In a brief answer embody a world of thought ? How can words convey the sense of a broken heart ? No ! language cannot do that. And if it could paint my feelings, why should I humble myself before those who have thus sported with and spurned them ? why lay bare the weakness of my heart to those who have proved themselves incapable of compassion ? What can I expect to gain by so doing ? Nothing."

Blinded by this false reasoning, he felt, at that moment, that he would have rejected Lady Adeline's hand, could he have gained it ; convinced, as he was, that her affections were no longer his own. Besides, who ever reclaimed or regained a heart by reproaches ? And then again relapsing into tenderness, he mourned over the defalcation of that purity and truth which he had worshipped even more than her charms. All these, and more than these, were the thoughts which checked the flow of Lord Albert's pen as he wrote copy after copy in answer to the letter, and tore each, in despair of ever writing one which could in any degree comprise or convey his mixed and agonized feelings.

But again the necessity of some answer pressed upon him ; and, although with the conviction that none which he could write at that moment would be adequate to express what he felt, or prove a faithful interpreter of the thousand tortures that possessed him, he finally traced and folded up a few brief sentences, sealing the envelope immediately, as if to preclude the possibility of further delay. Yet once

more he hesitated, once more a wish arose to write altogether in a different tone and strain ; but then he rapidly recalled to his aid all his late reasonings and feelings on the subject, and finally despatched the following letter :

“ Dear Lady Dunmelraise,

“ It would be doing injustice to my own feelings, if I did not state that they alone have prevented my answering your letter sooner ; the purpose and tenor of which made me too plainly feel, that any development of the sufferings called forth by its contents would be equally misplaced and obtrusive to you, as well as to Lady Adeline.

“ To say that any emotion of *surprise* has mingled with my sorrow would be contrary to truth, because I had felt the sudden and unexpected departure of your ladyship from London (not even communicated to me till your present letter) announced some decided change in your opinion and determinations in regard to myself. There is one point, however, for which, in the midst of all my sufferings, I must feel grateful ; it is, that the letter which announces to me the forfeiture of that happiness which for years I have been taught to cherish and consider as my own, leaves me no doubt that the future welfare of Lady Adeline now centres in some other object, in the attainment of which it will be more surely realized, than had it continued to rest on me. That that welfare may be realized in every sense of the word will ever be the prayer of,

“ Dear Lady Dunmelraise,

“ Your faithful and affectionate servant,

“ D'ESTERRE.

“ P.S. I shall of course communicate your letter, accompanied by my answer, to my father, Lord Tresyllian.”

No sooner was this letter beyond the power of Lord Albert's recall, and actually on the way to Dunmelraise, than he would have given every thing he possessed could he have changed its tenor : but this was only one of those fluctuations of passion, of which he had of late been so cruelly the sport ; and the impulse of the moment, had its object been attained, would as readily have given place to some other of a quite different tendency. When the mind is once suffered

to float about without a guiding principle of action, it is a mercy and a miracle if the being thus actuated does not become the prey of destruction.

As Lord Albert perused over and over again the copy of his answer, he imagined he read in it sufficient ground to call forth an explanation, on the part of Lady Dunmelraise, of the causes which had led to her sudden abandonment of Lady Adeline's engagement with himself. But then he speculated upon objects which like a blind man he could not see ; for never admitting, nor indeed feeling conscious, that it was his own errors which had wrought the change in Lady Adeline, he never could rightly apprehend the line of conduct which of necessity she must pursue. If he had done so, had he taken the beam from his own eye, then would he clearly have seen to take the mote from hers ; and it would not have required a second perusal of his answer to Lady Dunmelraise to have acknowledged that it afforded no opening whatever, whether from its tone or its contents, to induce herself or Lady Adeline to swerve from the course they had adopted, or lead them to any other determination than that which they had already avowed.

He however endeavoured to make himself think otherwise, and in some degree he succeeded in this object ; for what distortion will the imagination not assume when warped by passion ? In this delusive hope he continued for some days, vainly expecting every post to bring him some communication from Dunmelraise. How little he knew Lady Dunmelraise's feelings ! how falsely he judged of his own ! As soon as she perused his letter, she did not for a moment think of replying to it. She had indeed not doubted, for weeks past, that Lord Albert's heart and affections were totally alienated from her child ; but the degree of cold indifference with which, in her *reading* of his answer, he seemed to cast her off, exceeded what she could have thought possible. It may be that, in her interpretation of the letter, Lady Dunmelraise yielded in some degree to her previously-formed prejudices ; and, as is ever the case when we yield to prejudice, saw through them as through a glass darkly, and pronounced the being who could thus coldly renounce such a treasure as Adeline wholly unworthy of further thought. Far from feeling, therefore, that Lord Albert's reply required any further notice, or that it

contained any thing which could raise an after-regret if passed by in silence, or reanimate a dying spark of hope in Lady Adeline's breast, she considered it final and definitive, and without hesitation placed the letter in her daughter's hands.

Lady Adeline's sentiments, on having perused it, were in accordance with Lady Dunmelraise's; but as soon as the first brief flush of indignation had passed away, the bitterness of sorrow that was rooted in her heart claimed its full power, and *grief, not anger*, preyed like a canker on the bloom of her existence. Lady Dunmelraise watched, week after week, with an anxiety proportioned to its object, for a return of something like cheerfulness on the countenance of her dear child; but though resignation sat on Lady Adeline's pallid brow, and beamed in her angel smile, still there was a settled melancholy, a change of fearful import, impressed on her whole person. Even her very movements, once so gay and elastic, were now languid and measured, like one who was soon to pass to another sphere. Nothing of the vivacity of her age and temperament remained; and Lady Dunmelraise felt that he waited for the hoped-for change in vain.

It was therefore some relief to her, when a visit from Mr. Foley created a variety in the daily routine of their lives; and Lady Dunmelraise thought or fancied that the exertions which Lady Adeline made, in order to be agreeable to one for whom she had always entertained a maternal solicitude, seemed the only circumstance that at all dissipated the gloom in which her daughter was now habitually involved. Mr. Foley, however, while he remarked this favourable change, ascribed it to other motives; and with that self-love which predominated in his character, he saw in it a growing preference for himself, and waited only for a season in which he conceived the feelings of Lady Dunmelraise and her daughter would be sufficiently prepared to admit of a disclosure of his sentiments, to make an open avowal of them.

Meanwhile, Lord Albert, who was equally with Lady Adeline the victim of self-delusion and martyred affection, continued to drag through the heavy hours till even suspense itself became blunted. But Lord Albert continued to strengthen himself in what he deemed the duplicity and heartlessness of her conduct, and found a di-

sion to his sufferings in the idea that they were occasioned by an unworthy object, whom he was called upon by every rational principle to banish from his remembrance.

At length it likewise became known to him that Mr. Feley was actually an inmate of Dunmelraise, and this circumstance set the seal to the erroneous conviction which for so many months had been gaining on his deluded mind. While thus discarded, as he imagined, by her whom he had, in fact, always loved dearer than the whole world besides; wounded in his tenderest feelings, and offended in his family pride; Lord Albert unhappily found himself supported in his mistaken apprehensions by his father, Lord Tresyllian, who, accustomed to refer most actions to love of aggrandizement and power, and having survived those softer affections which at one time bound him to Lord Dunmelraise, and made him anxiously wish for a union between their children, now only saw in Lady Dunmelraise's withdrawing from this engagement some concealed object of interest, which impelled him scornfully to resent her behaviour, and thus confirm the delusive views of his son.

From the time of Lord Albert's having come of age, the entire independence of his circumstances had (without violation, however, of any filial duty on his part) occasioned his intercourse with his father to be of rare occurrence: but when he communicated the purport of Lady Dunmelraise's letter to Lord Tresyllian, an identity of feelings seemed to arise between them; and in their offended pride a tie of sympathy was freshly formed, by which they mutually encouraged each other in an ill-founded and unjust resentment.

Lord Albert's heart, however, was far differently constituted from his father's, and in most other respects they felt not together. Still, therefore, he found himself alone, as it were, in the world, without one kindred breast on which to lean. Perhaps no sensation of pain is greater than this conscious loneliness of being. He had hitherto avoided all open confidence with Lady Hamlet Vernon on the subject of Lady Adeline; for though she was well acquainted with all that had passed, yet from motives of delicacy, as well as from a secret mistrust even of her sympathy, he had remained silent. But when at length freed from the only tie which sealed his lips, the long-cherished and lingering hope of Lady Adeline's returning affection, it required no stimulus

to make Lord Albert unburthen his heart and all its griefs to one, the only one, who, he thought, entered into them. The subject once commenced, the whole troubled tide of fears, belief, conviction, and subsequent indignation was peured into her ear.

Too readily, and with too greedy delight, did she receive this confidence, as the sweet confirmation of all her long-nurtured and most ardent wishes ; and the first step she took, in consequence, to heighten his resentment against Lady Adeline, was to avow a knowledge of Mr. Foley's long residence at Duamelraise to be the result of his passion for her ; a passion approved, she said, by Lady Dunmelraise, as well as by her daughter, and which was soon to terminate in marriage ; adding, at the same time, that she felt, as well as their mutual friends (meaning Lady Tilney and her *coterie*), that it was matter of congratulation that an alliance so thoroughly destructive to his views and pursuits of life should thus be dissolved.

While in this manner Lady Hamlet Vernon fixed the dagger more firmly in Lord Albert's breast, she no longer hesitated to evince for him, in every word, and look, and action, her devotedness ; and it was not in nature, that under such an influence he should be allowed to retrace his steps, even had he wished to do so, or to reflect on his own conduct ; although, had he had recourse to self-examination, even in this stage of the business, he might still have retrieved his error.

Day after day, week after week, his diseased state of mind gained ground, till at length the whole moral man became corrupt, and Lord Albert was the slave of her whom he would have loathed, could he but have seen the snare she had so artfully drawn around him. It is true, the duties of his official situation employed him some hours every morning ; and in the routine of these there was no analogy to any thing like feeling, so that they proved a temporary antidote to pain : but when they were over, he was in the society of Lady Hamlet Vernon, and of Lady Hamlet Vernon alone ; for it was the nature of a mind like his to be wholly engrossed by one object.

The world, that in reality cares for no one's actions, except as affecting itself, looked on with indifference, and saw in Lord Albert's course only curious matter for speculation.

Some pitied him as a fool, should he contemplate matrimony with Lady Hamlet Vernon ; while others applauded the dexterity of the woman who could succeed in leading him captive, and secure to herself so great a prize. But one friend yet remained to Lord Albert, who would have sincerely lamented the circumstance, could he have believed such an event as marriage possible ;—because, though Lady Hamlet Vernon was undoubtedly clever, handsome, fascinating, yet he saw in her no sound, intrinsic qualities, nor was there attached to her rank or situation any of that preponderating family influence, which he could have wished should distinguish the wife of his friend. But Lord Glenmore was not one of those who doubted Lord Albert's good sense or principles ; and though he saw him involved in a *liaison* which he was far from approving, still he looked upon it as one of those temporary attachments from which he hoped soon to see him liberated, and therefore discarded all serious fears for him. But Lord Glenmore was unfortunately mistaken. The entanglement in which Lord Albert was involved was not one easily to be broken through.

Lady Hamlet Vernon's object was advancing rapidly, and her victim nearly sacrificed. London was now almost empty. The only individuals of note remaining in it were some official persons, who were looking forward with anxiety to the moment of their departure. Lady Glenmore's arrangements for her visit to the continent had been finally adjusted; and she had at length quitted town with a heart divided between regret at leaving her husband, and that kind of anticipated pleasure which attends a first visit to a foreign country.

Whether any regret mingled with these sentiments, as she journeyed with Lady Tenderden to the point of embarkation, at the idea of being likely to lose in her absence the society of Mr. Leslie Winyard, it is difficult to say ; and equally so whether the result of this absence would break through that intimacy with the latter, which her *soi-disant* friends considered to be of such perilous tendency. Mr. Leslie Winyard certainly did not leave town immediately on her departure.

In the midst of these final removals for the season, Lady Hamlet Vernon found it difficult to arrange her passing the

approaching autumn in the society of Lord Albert. To propose to himself directly any project of the kind was, she thought, hazardous ; and though feeling the importance of securing to herself his presence, she was obliged to trust to chance, and to the habitual influence which she knew she had obtained over him, in order to ensure his following her wherever she went.

“ Where do you mean to pass your autumn, Lord Albert ? ” she said one day to him, speaking as if in an unpremeditated manner, and announcing at the same time her intention of going to Tunbridge. “ Perhaps you will be induced, if you have no other plan in view, to pay me a visit there ? ”

“ Yes,” he replied, sighing, “ I shall like it exceedingly. Where can I go but where you are ? Nobody else in the wide world, save yourself, cares for me ; ”—and a tender glance from Lady Hamlet Vernon gave back a confirmation of the latter part of this querulous speech.

Many days more did not elapse, when Lord Albert, although pressed by Lord Glenmore in the most friendly manner to accompany him to his country seat during the recess, misled by the unfortunate and false conviction that no one participated in his feelings save her who had in reality caused their bitterness, blindly yielded to the delusion of this hollow attachment, and found himself loitering round Lady Hamlet Vernon’s footsteps on the furze-clad hills of Tunbridge.

CHAPTER XV.

PROCEEDINGS ABROAD.

HOWEVER small the interest which Lady Tilney really took in preserving the purity of Lady Glenmore’s character *intacte*, still her wishes for the preservation of that outward decorum which she deemed necessary towards the maintenance of her *coterie’s* respectability were perfectly sincere. It will not, however, appear that in this instance her wishes were likely to be realized.

On landing on the continent, the point to which Lady Glenmore and Lady Tenderden directed their steps was Spa, having abandoned their previous intention of going to Barèges ; a change in their plans, which they decided upon partly from the length of the journey, and partly from Lady Glenmore's not liking to be so very far from her husband. When they reached Spa, they found some few of their acquaintance already there, foreigners as well as English ; and ten days had not elapsed from their arrival, before Mr. Leslie Winyard, accompanied by Lord Gascoigne, joined their circle.

Lady Tenderden had already made a selection of such as were to constitute her society, and of course these latter persons were admitted in the number. Allowing for change of place and difference of hours, the same desultory mode of life was pursued by them at Spa as in London, and at best the same vacuity of mind and intention became the result. This negative description of the passing hours, however, was not applicable to all. Of course, in the present instance, there could have been but one motive which induced Mr. Leslie Winyard to resign the pleasures of an English autumn for the waters of Spa ; and this fact he seemed at no pains to conceal. Lady Glenmore was his avowed object.

There is something always unfavourable to virtuous happiness in the *voluntary* absence of a wife from her husband, and especially if she has designedly or carelessly, from vanity or *désavurement*, given encouragement to marked attentions from any other than her husband. Whatever may be alleged by some, that absence makes meeting sweeter, and renovates affection, it may be laid down as a rule well known to experience, that genuine wedded love is best maintained by that sweet habitude which renders each a part of the other, and which feels not that it can live separate from that dearer self : and happy, and only truly happy, are those married persons who, in an honest heart, feel that they can add to love virtue, and to virtue habit ; so that, when long years have gone by as a tale that is told, they can look back upon their course with joy, and feel it dearer as they know it to have been hallowed by the *lungo costume* and the *dolce memorie*.

Unnecessary absences, on the contrary, between married persons, are at best very dangerous experiments : they in-

duce in women an independence of feeling inimical to tenderness, and incompatible with the duties of a wife; and encourage, on the part of others, an intimacy and a freedom of manner, to the abandonment of those forms which, in the presence of the husband, would perhaps be observed.

Thus it was in the case of Lady Glenmore. Mr. Leslie Winyard, already too much encouraged by her easy good-nature and affability, impelled by vanity to suppose himself irresistible when he chose to give himself the trouble of being so, and not wholly indifferent to her whom he now pursued, considered Lady Glenmore's absence from England as intended to afford an opportunity for the furtherance of their intimacy. The mode of life at Spa, and similar places on the continent, where the English congregate, however resembling the empty folly of London in its moral effect, differs in this respect, that it is more like living in a family circle, divested of the ceremonious restraints of societies in great cities. The daily routine of arrangements which threw all those who circled together into an unavoidable familiarity, the long excursions during the day, the repose under some shade after a fatigue, the return at night, the supper, the dance that not unfrequently followed, proved all of them too favourable opportunities for a man of intrigue.

If, therefore, Lady Glenmore was in peril when guarded by the forms of society, in the presence of a husband whom she loved, and feeling the wholesome moral check which, to a young mind entering on the snares of life, the consciousness of a supposed cognizance of parents and friends so usefully imposes,—if, under all these circumstances of protection, she had yielded to, or rather been entangled in, an indiscretion respecting her intimacy with Mr. Leslie Winyard,—how much more fearful was her present danger, when no restraints of the kind were at hand to guard or to warn her!

Had Lady Tilney's object been of that true and high nature which proposed no result but to save Lady Glenmore's virtue, she would not have intrusted her to the guardianship of such a person as Lady Tenderden, who united to the airy flightiness of a Frenchwoman the spirit of an *intrigante*, which is to be found in all nations. But Lady Tilney's object was merely worldly and prudential,

namely, that of remeving a probable *fracas* from her own circle in England ; and this point carried, the other was of small importance. Lady Tenderden had drawn round her a society at Spa, quite in harmony with which she had been accustomed to live in. There were several persons of the *coterie* of London, who, from time-to time, made their appearance among them, and kept up the tone of the *rasssemblment* to its own peculiar pitch. Mingled with these were foreigners of distinction and diplomatists of various nations, who, from forming a false estimate of English society, as most foreigners do, fall into a very natural mistake respecting the higher classes in England, of whom they judge *en masse* by the limited specimen which they are taught to consider as the sample of our nobility, and who therefore, with this false view, circled round Lady Tenderden and her friends on the present occasion, as the centre of attraction and a model of English manners ; a melancholy mistake, and one by which foreigners have been led into the greatest errors respecting our higher classes.

Although this remark did not at first apply personally to Lady Glenmore, yet, under the circumstances of the case, Lady Tenderden was not a fitting guardian in any respect for her ; and in the end, during their residence at Spa, the permission of Leslie Winyard's *dévouement* made it attach to her with too much truth, and she became, consequently, as much the subject of animadversion and example as Lady Tenderden herself. In the life of dissipation thus followed, not even the seventh day was left for reflection or repose. The too often misapplied and dangerous adage, that "one must do at Rome as they do at Rome," was an excuse for entirely forgetting the Sabbath to keep it holy, an observance which is in some degree attended to among us (except by the most notoriously profligate); but it has been a just reproach of many thinking Roman Catholics on our nation, that, when abroad, we lay aside the religion we profess, at least its forms, while we laugh at those which *they* follow.

Of what religion are we, then ? might be the natural question asked, and was one which applied certainly to Lady Glenmore, who had now learned the most fatal of all lessons, that it is unnecessary to hallow the Sabbath day ; and she went on to learn, that she could live and be happy without

her husband. Letters came from him, breathing kindness and affection, and these were answered with something like a corresponding feeling, for still in her heart his image was enshrined, although her vanity betrayed her into the perilous error of being engrossed at the moment by the attentions and presence of another. Lord Glenmore's letters, however, contained no hope of his being able to join her at Spa ; for government contemplated an earlier assembling of parliament than usual, and the presence of all the ministers was required at an unusually early period. This circumstance, however, affected Lady Glenmore but little, for her regret was waning into carelessness at his absence. Thus bound to England, Lord Glenmore expressed his wish that Lady Glenmore should leave Spa about the end of October or middle of November, and proceed by the way of Paris, where he still indulged a faint hope that he should be able to join her.

Notwithstanding much dissuasion on the part of Lady Tenderden and Mr. Leslie Winyard against obeying these injunctions, Lady Glenmore remained firm, and they shortly after were on their way to Paris. Mr. Leslie Winyard, of course, took his route to Paris likewise ; for though he began to feel that the affair *traîn^e en longueur*, he was determined at least to enjoy the *renommée* of adding another name to the list of his successes. At Paris the rumour of his attachment to Lady Glenmore found a wider range, and among the mixed, and larger aggregate of English, became the subject of more marked and varied observation. Here, therefore, in the same selfish spirit of worldly-mindedness which had induced Lady Tilney to send Lady Glenmore to the continent, Lady Tenderden saw the propriety of giving some admonitory hints to the latter : such as, “ *It was not well to stake all on one throw* : that it was not in *good taste* to have but one cavalier always in attendance ; and that the *préféré* himself would cease to be flattered by that preference, if he had *champ libre* always at command, without any competitors to dispute the honour with him. Besides, there is a certain *retenue* to be observed,” she went on to say, “ by women of fashion, who should never give the vulgar an advantage over them, by not having a ready reply to make, or be made, to any disadvantageous or impertinent observation : for example, if they should say, ‘ Mr. Leslie Winyard

is always at Lady Glenmore's elbow,' it might be answered. 'And so is Prince Luttermanne, and Lord Gascoigne, and Lord Baskerville, and a thousand others.' A little address, my dear Lady Glenmore, sets all this sort of things to rights ; only one must know how to conduct oneself."

"There is nothing wrong," replied the still innocent but somewhat perplexed Lady Glenmore, "and therefore there is nothing to set right."

"*Non, assurément, nothing wrong,*" answered Lady Tenderden ; adding in her *doucereux* voice with more of truth than usual under her *patte de velours*, "and that is *just* the reason why you are not sufficiently upon your guard."

These hints, however, appeared so indirect in their tendency, and of so little consequence in the eyes of her to whom they were addressed, that they were merely smiled at, and passed by unheeded.

In this state matters continued till far on in November. It was the very season when Paris was beginning to fill. A few weeks of protracted absence from home was again pleaded for by Lady Tenderden, even though Lord Glenmore, from press of business in the ministry, had been obliged to abandon all idea of joining them ; and accordingly they lingered on from day to day at Paris.

The same cause which prevented Lord Glenmore from leaving London obliged Lord Albert d'Esterre to quit Brighton, whither he had accompanied Lady Hamlet Vernon. In returning to the subject of this *liaison*, few particulars can be adduced which would not appear trite and stale. Like all intimacies of the same nature, it had during this interval gradually approached a climax. Nothing in this world is stationary : the world itself is passing swiftly away ; but the use or abuse we make of existence remains. Lord Albert's intimacy with Lady Hamlet Vernon, must of necessity have either assumed a decided character, or have been totally broken off ; and, unfortunately for him, she played too deep a stake to lose for one moment that vigilance and foresight for which she was so distinguished, and which alone had constituted the success of her designs. It may be readily imagined that she now redoubled all her care, to secure the prize which was so nearly within her grasp. During the last few weeks, in which Lord Albert and herself had continued isolated from all other society,

with nothing to call his attention away from her, or to direct the current of his thoughts into any other channel, the result may be easily guessed.

Lord Albert made proposals of marriage; and it is unnecessary to add they were accepted with a transport of joy which Lady Hamlet Vernon could ill conceal within the bounds of prudence, but which, to his deluded view, appeared to be the effusion of a genuine and devoted passion. It is impossible for any generous nature not to feel gratified by the devotion of another; and Lord Albert was glad to mistake this gratitude for a tenderer and more spontaneous movement of the heart. Yet, as the moment approached for allying himself for ever to any other than her whose image, in despite of all his endeavours to the contrary, came back to him at intervals in the clouds of the air, in the shadows of the waters, or the dreams of the night, he sought for delay. Strange to say, too, some lingering doubt of Lady Adeline Seymour's becoming the wife of Mr. Foley at times crossed his fancy, for it was more like a vision of the fancy than a rational belief; but still he wished to think that she should be the first to bind herself to another; and with a feeling not amenable to the laws of reason, he looked anxiously in the newspapers every day to see the announcement of her nuptials.

Under these circumstances, and with this feeling, he was called to town to attend official business, with the hope, however, in a few days, of returning to Lady Hamlet Vernon. Arrived in London, he found himself, the first time for many months, absent from her, and robbed of the illusory charm of her society; a charm which he had taught himself to consider as necessary to him as the air he breathed. He now found, when official duties were over, that the hours hung heavily on his hands.

It had perhaps been owing to the idea of his having so long indulged in a selfish gratification, which must of necessity have drawn down observations derogatory to the character of Lady Hamlet Vernon, that had finally determined Lord Albert to make her the offer of his hand. But now, when away from her influence, he looked back upon the gulf over which he had passed, and contemplated it with somewhat different sensations; conscious that the step he had taken was irretrievable, he felt less than ever

disposed to seek diversion from his own thoughts, or relief from them in any other quarter. He even avoided much intercourse with Lord Glenmore, as though he was afraid the latter should read his secret ; for it was intended that his marriage should yet be kept profoundly secret ; partly in compliance with his own feelings, which suggested that the world (and who can, or who ought to be totally reckless of the world's award ?) might blame him for allying himself to a woman of Lady Hamlet Vernon's character, and partly at the instance of the latter, who, though she could not explain the cause of her apprehensions, yet dreaded lest the cup should be dashed from her lips by some unforeseen interference.

The time that Lord Albert did not pass literally in business, he employed in reading over Lady Hamlet Vernon's letters, which he received daily, or in answering them ; and as those she wrote breathed the most impassioned language, his own contained enough of that reflected hue of tenderness in them to please, if not to satisfy, her to whom they were addressed. The time was past when solitude and reflection could avail Lord Albert ; for he had decided his fate. It was his duty, therefore, now, as well as his interest, to encourage himself in the belief that he truly loved the present object to whom he devoted himself ; and he carefully endeavoured to shut out all remembrances which might recall the thought of another. Lord Albert had been nearly three weeks absent from Lady Hamlet Vernon, when he hastened one morning at an earlier hour than usual to Downing-street, where his letters were always directed. He found one from her, as was customary ; but, in taking it eagerly in his hand, he was aware it did not consist, as usual, of many sheets, but was a single letter in an envelope.

Something, he knew not what, struck him with agitation on this recognition, and he paused on breaking the seal ; then cast his eyes hurriedly over the open page, and looked in vain for the terms of endearment which were wont to be the first that courted his glance ; and he grew sick and dizzy as he read the first few lines, which ran thus : "Grieved I am at heart, and stunned by this fatal blow, so unexpected, so subversive of all our hopes. Is it not possible that, in the dismay of the moment, you may have interpreted more severely the words of Lady Dunmelraise than

they required?" Lord Albert started at the name of Dunmelraise, and held the letter from him, and gazed at it again. "Lady Dunmelraise!" he repeated aloud. "What can this allude to? And in Amelia's hand!" Again he looked at the letter, and turned over the page, and saw the signature. A death-like shudder seized him, and an icy chill ran through his heart. As his eye continued to run rapidly along the lines, it met the words, "dearest Mr. Foley." Again he paused. But he was not now in a state to reason on the propriety of reading through a letter evidently not addressed to himself, although he continued to do so; but, breathless with surprise, in vain essayed to read collectedly. At length mastering the contending feelings which for a few moments overpowered him, he perused the letter consecutively.

"Grieved I am at heart, and stunned by this fatal blow, so unexpected, so subversive of all our hopes. Is it not possible that, in the dismay of the moment, you may have interpreted more severely the words of Lady Dunmelraise than they required? Yet when I return to the copy of her letter, which you enclose to me, I cannot but think with you that there is nothing to hope. Still, how strange that both she and Lady Adeline should have allowed those demonstrations of your passion, which they must have understood, for such a length of time, without expressing any explicit disapprobation! And then you say, too, that you are confident, from every circumstance, and every word, and every look, that has occurred, or fallen, either from Lady Dunmelraise or her daughter, that d'Esterre no longer holds any place either in their affections or their esteem; and the conversation you report to have heard between Lady Delamere and her sister was certainly as conclusive as any thing could be of their utter rejection of the thought of any renewal of engagement with d'Esterre." Lord Albert groaned aloud.

"I know not what advice to give you. I dare not urge upon you a perseverance in your suit, because that might eventually, if Lady Dunmelraise and her daughter are firmly decided against it, draw down an interference which would give publicity to the affair; a circumstance, on all accounts decidedly to be avoided. Hitherto, I should suppose what has passed has been confined to their own breasts; for Lady Dunmelraise is too much acquainted with the world to make her-

self, or any one belonging to her, unnecessarily the subject of public remark. At present, you know, the secret is safe in our own keeping ; and after many hours of painful reflection as to what you had best do, I think nothing remains but your going immediately abroad for a time, to avoid the singularity of your absence from Dunmelraise.

" In regard to the heavy pecuniary disappointment which you must have experienced, dearest Mr. Foley, by this defeat of our plans, I hope I shall soon be in a situation to make you ample recompense ; for d'Esterre has at length so openly declared himself, that my marriage cannot long be delayed ; and that once accomplished, you may depend on my constant exertions for all connected with your interest. In the meanwhile, should you require any funds for your sudden departure, I enclose a draft for £200. I would not have you come by Brighton to embark, which perhaps you might be inclined to do, knowing me to be there ; and I think it better, for the present, that you do not write to me on this subject ; but let me have a few lines announcing your arrival on the continent.

" Again I repeat to you to count upon my most friendly assistance at all times. You may depend on my acquainting you, when the event on which now all depends shall have taken place ;

" And I am ever yours, affectionately,

" AMELIA HAMLET VERNON.

" P.S.—I would not have you state your intention of going abroad to any person ; and prevent, if possible, any announcement of your departure in the newspapers."

No words can adequately convey an idea of Lord Albert's feelings as he finished the perusal of this letter. It was plain, it was clear, that a conspiracy had existed between Lady Hamlet Vernon and Mr. Foley, of which he and Lady Adeline Seymour had become the victims. The detailed process of language cannot concentrate in one point the thousand varied feelings which combined in his bosom all the pangs of self-accusation with all the joy of believing that the precious being whom he had wronged was free from stain. Grief mingled with the conviction that he had again found his own transcendent Adeline, bright in all her purity,

only to be convinced, at the same moment, that he had himself placed a wide gulf between them that could never be overpassed ; and the knowledge that this was the case excited such overwhelming emotion in his breast as defies the power of language.

It would be wrong, however, in this instance, as in all others where reflection points a moral, not to observe the omnipotence of virtue, which, it may be truly said, is a light to lighten our darkness ; for in the depth of Lord Albert's present sufferings there was a latent spring of consolation in his heart, the cause of which he could little understand or account for at the moment, and from which he was not prepared to derive the benefit it was intended afterward to convey ; and this consolation was a sense of humble contrition, derived from the consciousness that the blow which had fallen upon him was righteously dealt, and that it was only retributive justice that he should meet his punishment from the very person for whom he had, in the indulgence of his vanity, played with the feelings of another till at length he sacrificed and lost her.

This sense of humility is ever the foundation of true repentance ; and true repentance brings resignation ; and resignation is the balm which sooths a wounded spirit. He soon felt that the merciful ways of Providence had forced him unwillingly to a knowledge of his own fault, and with a contrite heart he kissed the rod that smote him. He felt at once as though a heavy burden were lifted from his breast. None of the double-mindedness, none of the obscure uncertainty, by which of late he had been oppressed and involved, now darkened his path. He was like one who is brought from a prisoned cavern to rejoice in the wholesome air and light of heaven. He no longer hesitated in his course, or wavered how he should conduct himself, but determined to profit by the severe lesson he had received, and act once more uprightly. He felt, as it were, instantaneously, that he had never really loved Lady Hamlet Vernon, and that vanity alone had betrayed him into her snare.

Had he loved her, would he not, even with the conscious proof before him of her perfidious conduct, have at least inquired over a knowledge of her baseness ? As it was, he thought not of her, save in reference to his own erring conduct.

"Oh Adeline, Adeline!" he exclaimed, in bitterness of heart, "is it for such a one as this that I have lost you, and deprived myself for ever, not only of your affection, but your esteem? Yet, though to retrieve the past is impossible, and to become what I once was in your eyes is as impossible as it is to recover mine own consciousness of desert, still I will live for you and you alone." The virtuous principle which had thus been restored to its rightful place in Lord Albert's breast gave him power to struggle with sorrow successfully in this his hour of need: and though at intervals he sunk into that despondency which, lost as he was to all his best affections and brightest hopes, could not but flow back upon him with an overwhelming tide, still the sense of returning virtue bore him up again, and fixed him on a rock from whence no tide of circumstances could hurl him.

In this situation he thought, for a time, that he stood alone in the world, without one sympathizing friend; yet, perhaps, there was one who still remained—Lord Glenmore. Should he open his heart to him? Should he seek succour and counsel from him? No. Counsel he needed not, for his mind was made up *how to act*; and consolation could not, at the present moment, flow from any earthly source. As involuntarily he read over and over again Lady Hamlet Vernon's letter, a still renewing sense of the baseness of the writer flashed upon him. In every turn and phrase he thought he traced some clue to each individual circumstance which had occurred to poison his mind, and give birth to the unworthy suspicions he had entertained of his Adeline: every one of them, in turn, seemed to rise up, as it were, in judgment against him; and again he wondered how the artifices with which he had been deceived had not before been detected by him.

The whole of his intimacy with Lady Hamlet Vernon, from its commencement, was next reviewed. His mind went back to the first evening in which he met her; her praises of his Adeline; the seductive grace with which she expressed her hope, when he spoke of foreign intimacies, that he would find some objects worthy also of his regard and friendship in his native land. He saw, as if at the moment, her downcast looks, and felt over again the surprise which her tone and manner caused him. He recalled their interview at the church at Restormel; her subsequent con-

versation, relative to Lady Adeline, before he left that place for London ; and in all these, and in every other incident connected with his growing intimacy, he now beheld the wily stratagem of a preconceived plan to win away his heart and affection from one to whom this Circean destroyer of his peace was as widely opposed as darkness to light.

This probing of his wounds, this investigation of the circumstances which had involved him in error, was a wholesome though painful exercise to his mind ; for he traced his misery to its rightful source—himself. He could not but dwell on the fearful and rapid change which had been produced in him by a life passed in a circle whose whole tendency was to undermine principle and destroy the understanding. He asked himself, what was he now, compared to what he had been eighteen months before ? what action, during that period, could he recall without blushing for the misuse or waste of time ? How had his pursuits been abandoned ! his honourable views in life lost sight of ! his studies neglected ! all the fruits of long and virtuous education scattered ! and himself become an object of his own and of all good men's contempt !

In reflections such as these, the hours passed away, on the day of his receipt of the letter. He had hurried through his official business as quickly as possible, in order to seek the retirement of his own apartment ; and there, with the picture of Adeline before him, he sat absorbed in harrowing contemplation. So entirely had the current of his affections been sent back to their proper channel by the revulsion which had shaken him, that with the exception of perusing Lady Hamlet Vernon's letter, for the purpose of bringing home more strongly the clear conviction of her infamy, he had not felt one regret on her account. Even the feeling of indignation, which conduct so base was calculated naturally to excite, had not for more than a moment occupied his heart ; a heart which was as dead to any impression she could make upon it, as though he had never known her.

Midnight had already passed, and the idea that Lady Hamlet Vernon would be in ignorance the while of what had occurred had not struck him. He then felt the painful part which he was called upon to perform, in addressing the person whom he had been on the verge of making his wife in language such as her conduct merited and his own

reproaches might dictate. He at length resolved to let the night pass, and in the morning, if possible, to set himself to the task with a calmer mind.

He slept not, however, and arose feeling distracted and feverish. Finding himself unable to go out, he sent, therefore, to Downing street for some official papers which were to be looked over. The messenger brought back with these his letters also : among them there was one from Lady Hamlet Vernon. His soul sickened at the sight, and he cast it from him with disgust. He resolved not to open it, for he must necessarily loath the expressions of attachment with which he knew it would be filled ; and he determined to return it unopened, together with his answer. This answer, in the course of the day, he despatched by express ; feeling, the moment he had given vent to his indignation, that it was but justice to do so, both to himself, and to his injured and lost Adeline.

The tenor of his reply may be easily conceived. He kept the original of the letter which had so happily removed the veil of wickedness from his eyes, but he transcribed a copy ; and having animadverted on the baseness of the arts that had been practised on himself, and the fiend-like cruelty that had been exercised on the former cherished object of his affections, he avowed his determination never again to hold intercourse with her who had been the cause of so much misery and delusion. At the same time, with a feeling of that nice honour and noble generosity of soul which had never entirely left Lord Albert's breast, he informed Lady Hamlet Vernon that her infamy would remain a secret with him, unless her own future conduct towards himself should make it necessary, in self-defence, to do otherwise.

Before this answer reached Lady Hamlet Vernon, she had been in some degree prepared for the blow, for Mr. Foley, who was in town, on receiving the letter which had been intended for Lord Albert, instantly surmised the worst, and had proceeded with the utmost haste to Brighton.—There Lord Albert's answer found him and Lady Hamlet Vernon in all the dismay and terror which detection of so sinister an intrigue would naturally cause.

The arrival of Lord Albert was hourly looked for by them, as the sure consequence of what had taken place, in order to demand an explanation of the letter which had fallen into

his hands ; for Lady Hamlet Vernon was certain that she had written no other letter by that post except to himself and Mr. Foley, and felt, therefore, a conviction on the subject of his arrival, which was anticipated as a certainty : and although the necessity of the moment obliged Mr. Foley and Lady Hamlet Vernon to be in consultation together, a person was on the watch to apprise them of his approach, so that Mr. Foley's presence might not strengthen the suspicions already connected with his name.

Under these circumstances, therefore, the arrival of a letter only was, at the moment, rather a relief ; though it had been felt by the parties that there was more chance of Lord Albert's being still deceived, had he been exposed to the influence of Lady Hamlet Vernon's charms in a personal interview.—His letter was broken open in haste : the return of her own last unopened, which fell from the envelope, sufficiently foretold its purport. The messenger had departed after giving in the packet, with a brief announcement that there was no reply. It would be impossible to characterize all the feelings of disappointed passion, self-interest, hatred, and revenge, together with the mutual reproaches to which these gave birth between the detected actors of this infamous intrigue.

After giving way, however, to the first ebullitions of anger against each other, mutual recrimination, and all those scorpion-like feelings which are the consequences of a co-partnery in guilt, the sense of necessity to secure self-preservation, and to shield themselves from public ignominy, made them both catch eagerly at the terms of secrecy implied in the latter sentence of Lord Albert's letter ; and when Lady Hamlet was convinced that there was no hope of regaining him to her views, she felt the necessity of submission, and sheltering herself under such terms as the exigency of the case required. All love was banished from her breast by feelings of rage and shame at her detection ; and with the heartlessness of an *intrigante*, she determined to put *bonne mine à mauvais jeu*, and boldly deny a guilt which she knew could be but covertly imputed to her. She wrote an answer, therefore, on the instant, to Lord Albert, couched in terms such as the offended feelings of a haughty woman would dictate. In her turn she cast off Lord Albert—"one for whose happiness she avowed that

she had been ready to sacrifice every thing. But now she found that the very measures she had taken from pure devotion to himself had been made matter of accusation against her ; measures easily explained, if an explanation had been solicited. It was he who had sought her affections, not she his ; and when he thus rudely rejected a heart which he had taken pains to win, she could not but feel that she had escaped from that irretrievable ruin which must have followed her union with him." Having thus endeavoured to turn the tide of recrimination against Lord Albert, the feeling which at the moment pressed most urgently upon her was, as in the case of all criminal confederacies, to rid herself of the insufferable presence of the partner of her crime ; and therefore pressing upon him the draft which had been intended originally to remove him to the continent, she placed it in his hands for the same purpose now, and in a few hours afterward he had embarked for Dieppe.

Lord Albert read Lady Hamlet Vernon's communication with calm indifference. His eyes were unsealed. He knew her character now too thoroughly to be surprised : still less was he to be shaken from his purpose ; and was far more firmly resolved to pursue the right course than he had ever been to follow the wrong : and wretched as he was at heart, he found consolation in reflecting deeply on the merciful interposition of a higher power than any earthly one, which had thus snatched him from misery. Wretched as he was at heart, he found consolation ; and with this feeling commenced the arduous task of bringing back his mind and heart to former principles of uprightness and virtue.

Lady Hamlet Vernon, on her part, took a different course. Sensible that to betray any feeling on the event would only draw down further remark and observation, she again plunged into the society from which she had of late withdrawn ; and prolonging her stay at Brighton, avoided all those unpleasant circumstances which, for a time at least, would have attended her meeting Lord Albert in public.

Lord Albert d'Esterre had formed his resolution on a principle of rectitude, and acted upon it with that degree of promptitude which is the sure test of sincerity in well-doing. When the moment's exertion, however, was over, his mind, enfeebled from the lengthened moral disease under which it

So long had laboured, shrank back in conscious weakness : and he became sensible, that however earnest the will may be, the difficulty is great to retrace our steps from error ; and that it is still more difficult to regain firm footing in the path of virtue, when we have wandered from it for any length of time.

The painful recollection of the hours he had lost, or more than lost, the conviction of the misuse of his intellectual faculties, pressed upon him with a leaden weight that seemed to defy all his efforts to recover the power and energy of his mind. That solitude of the heart, too, which was now in prospect before him, shed a gloom around ; for, for whom was he to live ? was the natural question which now suggested itself, and one not likely to meet a wise reply at the moment.

After-reflection, indeed, might tell him, that there is a higher motive to live to virtue, than any which this world's affections can afford ; but to this nobler impulse he had unfortunately for the present become insensible, and in having become so he had lost the surest means of happiness. Lord Albert was, however, notwithstanding this sense of destitution, unwilling, for many reasons, to throw himself on the only stay left him—the supporting friendship of Lord Glenmore : partly, perhaps, from that averseness to humble himself in the sight of another, however dear or honourable the individual may be, which it is so common to human nature to feel ; and also from many mixed motives, alike of genuine good and *spurious* quality, which affect the purposes of all at some time and in some degree.

Lord Glenmore had in part heard and part guessed Lord Albert's rupture with Lady Hamlet Vernon, and secretly rejoiced in the event : but with the delicacy and kindness of feeling which was his particular characteristic, he tacitly entered into the unhappiness of his friend ; and thought, as he always did when he saw another fall into temptation's snare, that had he been tempted in as powerful a degree, he also might have fallen under the like condemnation.

Without, therefore, appearing to seek Lord Albert's confidence on the present occasion, Lord Glenmore showed him all the tender sympathy he entertained for him by a thousand nameless kind attentions ; attentions which rekindled in Lord Albert's breast all his feelings of former friendship.

and a sense of the value of that friend from whom of late he had been so entirely estranged. Gradually and imperceptibly they became once more reunited in their habits of intercourse, and Lord Albert's vacant hours were again devoted to Lord Glenmore's society. Little did the latter suspect that the time was drawing nigh, when he himself should require similar support and consolation to that which he was now affording Lord Albert. But thus it is:—we are all dependent beings one upon another; and they are wise who, by mutual good offices, lay up for themselves a store of kindness for the hours of perplexity and bereavement.

Several weeks had passed away, after Lord Glenmore's express wish for Lady Glenmore's return, before the latter quitted Paris. This delay arose not so much from a positive reluctance on her part to return home, as from that idle habit of living in the momentary excitement of frivolous pleasures which so much enervate the mind, and deaden the sense of virtuous affection. Lady Tenderden's character afforded no antidote to the bane of this growing evil; and Mr. Leslie Winyard, of course, still bent on the pursuit of Lady Glenmore, used all his endeavours to retard her stay in Paris as long as possible.

At length, however, the day of their departure came; and when she arrived in London, she was received in the arms of an affectionate and too confiding husband. Perhaps, on the first moment's reflection, brief as these moments were, Lady Glenmore felt in this cordial reception somewhat of self-reproach that her return had been so long unnecessarily deferred: but it is one of the concomitant evils of such a mode of life as hers was, that it is utterly impossible reflection should have any permanent seat in the mind; so that the natural checks of conscience, which at intervals will force themselves into view in hearts not quite hardened, become gradually smothered and suppressed, till at length they are wholly discarded.

Thus, on the morrow after Lady Glenmore's arrival, the better though perhaps painful feelings with which she arose were not suffered long to maintain their ascendancy. The throng of inquirers and friends, and of *désœuvré* persons, who flocked around her, soon banished all reflection. The inquisitive, investigating spirit of a long morning's *tête-à-*

ate with Lady Tilney, the empty nothingness of Lady Ellersby's converse ; the worldly-mindedness of Lady de Chere, and the frivolity of all ; with a subsequent *soirée* that closed the scene of her first recognition in London ; were circumstances well calculated to turn away Lady Glenmore from any salutary train of thought, which, if steadily entertained, might have led to a good result. She found even in Lord Albert's constant presence (for he now almost lived with Lord Glenmore) a secret satisfaction, a something of the continuation of that scattering of attention which had become habitual to her during her last four months' residence on the continent ; and the circumstance of never being alone with her husband in the once happy privacy of domestic quiet, which some time previously she would have mourned over and regretted, was now an agreeable relief to her. What a fatal symptom it is of the state of the affections, when the presence of any third person is felt to be a relief, in the habitual intercourse of daily life between man and wife ! It is a touchstone by which all married persons may try the condition of their hearts ; and one by whose proof it is always well to abide, if any lurking evil is found to endanger happiness.

Although Lady Glenmore might not feel that there was much to hide in what had passed during her absence, and that many would have called her conduct only living as others do who live in the world, yet her nature, originally, was so amiable and ingenuous, that she still reserved a place in her breast for that silent monitor which had never wholly left its station ; and it told her that perhaps all that had been said, and done, and written, and permitted, would not have been agreeable to her husband. There are a thousand minor occurrences, which, when considered apart, are *not* of criminal nature ; but which, when taken together, form a tremendous aggregate of danger, and which are most certainly detrimental to the purity of married love. If the sources of the heart are polluted, of what value is the nature of the virtue that is left ?

Lady Glenmore certainly did feel that there were circumstances attendant on her *éjour* at Paris and at Spa which she would not relate to her husband ; and she was happy to think Lord Albert's constant presence afforded a check to any but general allusions on the subject of her tour. Had

Lord Glenmore been unoccupied with public affairs, or had he *not* been one whose own uprightness of heart and conduct shut out all suspicion of others, he might have observed that something of *génie* in Lt. ⁴ Glenmore's manner rendered her different from what she had been. But delighted to be once more with his wife ; happy in her presence, and in the joyousness which her renovated health and beauty diffused around him ; and frequently absorbed, besides, in those cares which abstract a man from many of those minute perceptions that idle people are alive to, he observed not the alteration in her manner.

Three days, however, after her return, a case addressed to Lord Glenmore at his office in Downing-street was forwarded from the custom-house at Dover. On the box being opened, it was found to contain a *porte-feuille* resembling those in which public papers are transmitted between official personages, and was stamped with a coronet, and with the initials G. G. The box itself was not fastened, and was accompanied by a note from one of the heads of the custom-house, stating, that it had been left at Dover some days back ; and, from all accounts, by one of his lordship's servants in the hurry of departure, the initials on the box seeming to authorize the supposition. On the note being handed to Lord Glenmore by his secretary, he desired him to inspect the contents of the *porte-feuille* ; and when informed that it seemed to contain papers of a private nature, Lord Glenmore desired to see it himself. He found it filled with letters addressed to Lady Glenmore, and among others, some which he recognised as being his own ; and he was about to give orders that it should be sent to his house, concluding it was a mistake, when, on removing some of the letters, and lifting them up for the purpose of shutting the box, a miniature portrait attracted his eye. He thought he recognised the features. He paused for a moment, still gazing at it. At last he exclaimed, "Why ! this is surely Leslie Winyard's portrait ! How came it here ? This must be a mistake!" Again he looked at the letters, but there was no mistake. The letters were all addressed to Lady Glenmore, and some of them were his own.

He involuntarily shuddered. For a moment he half doubted *what* to do ; whether to close the box, and leave it to Lady Glenmore to explain a circumstance which appeared

so strange, or whether himself to endeavour to elucidate the mystery by an investigation of the contents. He hesitated between these two resolves, while his hand mechanically turned the papers over. In another moment his attention was arrested by a few brief words, beginning, " You will not leave Paris, surely, so cruelly, so unexpectedly ? Remember there are duties of the heart, as well as those of *convenience*. I rely upon your giving me some days to prepare for your absence : indeed you owe me this favour ;" — and the note ran on in a similar strain of familiarity, and implied confidence of a return of sentiment.

To a person of Lord Glenmore's open, unsuspicuous nature, the shadow of such a discovery as seemed now unfolding itself was paralyzing ; yet he was a man of too much strong sense alike to shrink from investigation when such was necessary, as to act upon any sudden impulse, or form a hasty conclusion. There was enough, however, in what he had seen to make him think deeply, fearfully, and to determine him on probing the matter at once to its very source.

After a few moments' reflection, his resolution was taken. He knew that to breathe such a suspicion as these circumstances created of the woman he loved, even to herself, if she were innocent, would be the severest wound and deepest degradation that could be inflicted on her heart ; and if she were *not* innocent, that it would demand more of calm reflection, than, in the agony of excited feelings, he could perhaps command, in order to come to any decision. He determined, therefore, ere he took any further step in the business, to proceed to an immediate examination of the *porte-feuille*. With every nerve stretched to agony, and a brain on fire, he removed the papers one by one, turning over all the letters and notes it contained. He dreaded to find what he was searching for. Who can express the pain of such a search ? It was some time before he found any character assimilating to those of the note he had already perused. At length, when he came near the bottom of the portfolio, the same handwriting presented itself on a thousand scraps of paper, and on the directions of various letters.

Again he started, and was obliged for a moment to pause, his senses refused their office ; but, in another, he rallied ;

though with that inward tremor which checks the pulse of life, he turned them over, and, seizing the first that presented itself, read it with a perfect knowledge of its contents. The notes and letters were numerous, yet he missed not one ; but continued to read them carefully through with breathless eagerness, alive to the apprehension of discovering, at every line of their perusal, something that would inflict a more deadly wound than he had yet received. When he came to the conclusion, he literally gasped for breath. "Thank God," he exclaimed, as he dashed a burning tear from his cheek, "there is nothing positively to criminate the wife of my bosom!" But to so fond, so noble and faithful a heart as Lord Glenmore's, was it not sufficient agony to find, that, while absent from him, her intimacy with another had been of that kind which could permit of such a correspondence ?—a correspondence which proved that her intercourse with Mr. Leslie Winyard had been of that nature which sullies the purity of a married woman ; and which proved, likewise, that it had been one of daily habitude, and that not only had the hours of the day been passed in his presence, but often, by the dates of the notes, it was evident she must have received them in the morning before she arose, and at night after she had retired to rest. Was this not sufficient to harrow up his soul ? Calling, however, to his aid as much calmness as the circumstances in which he was placed could admit, he reperused the notes, to avoid all chance of a hasty or superficial judgment ; and again he had the consolation of feeling certain that they in nowise criminated Lady Glenmore, however much they proved her guilty of an indiscretion of a most perilous kind.

The letters were the artful compositions of a man of intrigue, such as he knew Mr. Leslie Winyard to be ; and in the intimacy which they discovered, there was a stain on the character of Lady Glenmore, which, though many degrees removed from positive vice, was still a degradation to her and to himself. And is there not a pang of long remorse to follow such a dereliction of duty ? And are there not tears of penitence, wrung from the heart's inmost core, to be shed, which, though they through mercy wash out sin, cannot wash out shame ? And is there not a something, too, of self-condemnation that pierces the heart of the husband who can, in the veriest shadow of a shade, impute to

his own neglect, or carelessness, or over-weaning security, his wife's aberrations? Oh! what a world of solemn reflection was now opened up before Lord Glenmore's view! Bitterly did he repent having ever suffered a man of such a character as Mr. Leslie Winyard to be on terms even of acquaintance in his house.

It was not the time, however, to dwell on this irretrievable point; neither to give way to the suspicions which flashed across him, of Lady Tenderden's having been, at least, deeply to blame in suffering the progress of an affair of which she must have been aware, and which she ought to have arrested in its course by returning home directly. Neither did he suffer himself to dwell on the reflection, that perhaps the society into which Lady Glenmore had been thrown in England might have laid the foundation of her present deviation from propriety. It was all too late. It was enough, for the present moment, to know, by the evidence before him, that a fearful evil existed; and he prayed inwardly that he might already have learned its full extent. He felt that he could have no surer test how far Lady Glenmore's heart was involved in the error of her conduct, than by a direct appeal to herself; for he thought, "It is impossible she could as yet have lost that ingenuousness, that openness of disposition, which was ever her peculiar charm! The brief space of a few months cannot have uprooted virtues which were the growth of years! Should it be,"—and again he offered up aspirations to Heaven that strength and counsel might be given him to act for the best under all circumstances, and as in a Christian spirit he ought to do.

Immediate action, under a sense of mental agony, is less painful than an inactive endurance; and Lord Glenmore hastened home to sound the full depth of his misery. Arrived at his house, he found Lady Glenmore was out. He felt it impossible to meet her any where but under his own roof and alone, and was therefore determined to await her return. It was late before she came in; and as she hurried from her carriage, she gave orders that it should be at the door again in an hour, and was proceeding hastily to her apartment to change her dress for dinner, when a servant followed her half way up stairs, saying that Lord Glenmore had desired to see her ladyship as soon as she entered. "Tell Lord Glenmore," she replied, in a gay tone of voice, "that

I am very late, and have hardly time to dress. I am going to dine with Lady Tenderden ; but I will see him before I go out. At what time is Lord Glenmore's carriage ordered ? at eight, is it not ?"

" I believe so, my lady," was the reply.

" Oh ! very well. Then I shall be with him before I go out."

Lord Glenmore, however, had heard his wife's voice ; and coming out of his room he called to her, " Georgina, I must speak with you." There was something in the tone in which he spoke unlike its usual sound, which made Lady Glenmore, without waiting to answer, descend immediately to his room. She entered, and was beginning to state the purport of the message she had sent to him by the servant, when he said to her, in the same grave and impressive tone, " Georgina, you cannot leave home to-day."

" What is the matter ?" she exclaimed. " My father ! is he ill ? or my mother ? What *has* happened ? Has any thing befallen *them* ?—for mercy's sake tell me ;"—and she rushed into his arms trembling and in tears. Lord Glenmore bade her compose herself. " They are well, quite well," he said : and gently disengaging himself from her, he gazed at her for a moment in silence, as though he would read her inmost soul ; and then said, " Georgina, have you no other cause for apprehension than for the safety of your parents ?"

" Oh, yes !" she replied, wildly, " for yourself ;" and again flung herself into his arms. " Has any thing grieved *you* ? has any thing befallen *you* ?"

Lord Glenmore was touched by this genuine mark of feeling for himself, which he knew her too well to think was assumed. He sighed deeply ; and pressing his hand on his breast, unconsciously gave utterance to the hope which, at the moment this proof of her affection afforded him, murmuring audibly, " All may yet be well." Lady Glenmore looked at him with an inquiring eye ; when at length, taking from the table the packet of Leslie Winyard's letters, he opened them before her, asking her if she knew them, and if they had been addressed to herself. She looked at them with an expression of surprise : and then mingled shame and dismay were painted on her countenance, the colour went and came in her cheek, her lip trembled, and covering her face with her hands, she burst into an agony of tears.

"Georgina, I adjure you," said her husband, in the most solemn tone, rendered hollow and tremulous by emotion. "I call upon you by all that is sacred; by your vows, plighted to me at the altar; by the love which, if all things are not alike deceptive, you have till lately evinced towards me——"

"Till lately!" she interrupted him, with a gesture and an expression of the most harrowing agony. "oh! ever, ever!" —and would again have thrown herself into his arms, but that Lord Glenmore retreated from her advance, and she fell on her knees with clasped hands before him, and raising her eyes stedfastly to his, remained in silent supplication, till Lord Glenmore, evidently as much moved as herself, gently raised her, and bidding her sit on the sofa by him, said, "You must be calm, Georgina. I must hear your explanation. I need not ask you if you felt there was no impropriety, as a married woman, in your receiving notes of this description: your agitation proves that you feel it was wrong. But I must first know how you came to admit of any addresses of the sort; and then I must learn how far your error has proceeded, and whether your heart is engaged in it"—Lady Glenmore shook her head in agony of denial.—"And remember, Lady Glenmore," continued Lord Glenmore, "that while the most perfect openness on your part can alone restore you in time to my affection, so also any deception for the moment, or any success in imposing on me, must eventually recoil on yourself, and only hasten your ruin and the entire loss of my heart and esteem."

Lady Glenmore remained bathed in tears, apparently unable to give utterance to what was passing in her breast.

"If I understand you right, Georgina, by the gesture which this moment escaped you, your heart is *not* engaged in this affair. But how, then, I ask, could you for a moment suffer any one to assume an intimacy with you such as these notes testify? Surely it could not be vacancy of affection, and in default of any object of attachment; for was I not myself, a few short months before, the husband of your free choice? Or is it that you are changed indeed?" he added, with a look of inquiring anxiety.

Again Lady Glenmore shook her head in bitterness of sorrow.

"Tell me, then; how long has this kind of familiarity ex-

isted between you and the writer of these notes ? and tell me, is any one aware of this degrading intimacy ?”

“ I will tell you all, Glenmore,” she exclaimed ; “ all—all !” Lord Glenmore shuddered to think how his happiness rested on the awful revelation of what that all might be. “ I will tell you every thing,” she repeated ; and endeavouring to still the sobs that burst from her heaving bosom, she began.—“ That you, Glenmore, should think my heart engaged to any one but yourself is the deepest pang I feel ; and if I have been guilty, in appearance, of any imprudence or indiscretion, it is *only in appearance*. In judging me, I hope you will be merciful, though perhaps I cannot ask this at your hands. But if you see fit to cast me off, and if what I shall say avail me nothing in restoring me to your affection, still my heart will be yours till it ceases to beat ; and as no one has ever shared it for an instant, so shall no one *ever*, to my dying hour. I give my heart or my affections to such a one as Mr. Leslie Winyard ?—impossible ! I could not if I would. You, you *alone* can ever possess it. But to evince the tenderness which I feel for you in public, I was told was wrong, was ridiculous ; and I was taught to think that you yourself would cease to love me, if I troubled you with demonstrations of this fondness. I was told, also, that another than you ought to be my attendant in the world ; and the example of those around me confirmed me in this idea.” Lord Glenmore sighed heavily as he felt the truth of what fell from Lady Glenmore.

“ Who *could* have told you this ?” he uttered, involuntarily.

“ Glenmore, did you not yourself tell me, that I must look to the conduct of those with whom I have lived as the best guide for my own ? did you not tell me that Lady Tenderden would be my best model ? And if I have displeased you in my late conduct, think how much I have been led into the error by your own directions ?”

“ Georgina, your heart must tell you, that I could never intend, by any suggestions on my part, that you should form an *intimacy* with such a person as Mr. Leslie Winyard, at least such an intimacy as you seem to have done by these notes. It is true I might have bid you lay aside the foolish expectation that I should be ever at your side in public ; but I could never judge so ill of your understanding, as to sup-

pode that such expressions, on my part, could be interpreted to the extent of endangering your honour and my happiness. But proceed. You have not yet told me how this intimacy has grown, or what encouragement you have given to justify such insolent presumption."

"Indeed, indeed, Glenmore, I can hardly tell you how. But first, whenever I *was* in public, you were always absent; or, if not absent, at least occupied with others and not with myself. I sat alone, *enuyé*, and with a feeling of desertion. At the *écarté* parties, especially, I felt desolate. To them, you know, no young, unmarried ladies were admitted; and the persons who composed the society were either engaged in play, or else those who sat out were so engaged, two and two, in conversation at different parts of the room, that I felt awkward in attempting to join them. Oh! how I have sat, night after night, in those fine rooms, thinking how little they afforded happiness, and wishing myself any where else! The first person who paid me any attention was Mr. Leslie Winyard. I found him agreeable and entertaining; and neither saw nor heard, in his manner or conversation, any thing that the whole world might not have seen or heard with me. If others spoke to me, it was a matter of form, or only a passing word, without seeming to care whether I answered or not; while he, on the contrary, always listened to what I had to say with apparent interest,—always seemed impressed with a wish to please me whenever we met; and thus our intimacy commenced. Deprived of you, Glenmore, I thought there was no harm in amusing myself in public during the time that I was there, instead of being quite *dé laissée*. You know how unwilling I was to enter on a life of dissipation." Lord Glenmore again sighed, as if in assent to the truth of these words; and blamed himself inwardly that he had ever suffered Lady Glenmore to mingle, unprotected by himself, in society which now, for the first time, appeared to him, in its full force, to be of such dangerous tendency, that he felt he ought to have known better.

"But your greater intimacy abroad," he went on to ask, "Georgina? for it was abroad that these notes seem to have been written. Did you receive none such before your departure?"

"None, on my sacred word," she replied.

"Then how came you to admit them?"

"Oh! I can scarcely tell. Sometimes we were left in doubt, the evening before, whether our party was to take place on the following day or not, and he wrote to me to know how it was to be. Then I sometimes returned fatigued with our day's excursion, and a note of inquiry would arrive. Then another morning would come flowers, another music, and with all these came notes."

"Did you ever answer them?"

"Very seldom, for you know I hate writing; and when I did it was only a literal word of reply to some question about the half hour at which we were to ride or dine out. The notes themselves will tell you this, Glenmore, for they complain of never being answered."

"But if you did not answer, you valued them, Georgina, or you would not have preserved them."

"Yes," she replied, "I liked the attention they proved; but that was all. I meant no harm; and though Lady Tenderden frequently knew of the circumstance, she never reproved me for receiving them."

"Did Lady Tenderden," exclaimed Lord Glenmore, with surprise, "never tell you you were in the wrong, or, at least, imprudent?"

"No—no," Lady Glenmore answered, with some hesitation, as if endeavouring to recollect herself.

"You hesitate, Georgina. Did Lady Tenderden, I ask you pointedly, never make any remark on Mr. Leslie Winyard's attentions to you?"

"Yes, yes; once she did say something."

"What was it?" exclaimed Lord Glenmore, with breathless impatience.

"She told me that I should not encourage Mr. Leslie Winyard *alone*; that it was bad taste to have but one cavalier; that he would grow tired of me if I did not divide my preference."

"Gracious heaven!" exclaimed Lord Glenmore, striking his hands together; "and is it to this guardianship that I have intrusted you?—But the picture, Georgina, the picture! tell me, how came the picture of that man in your possession?"

"His picture!" repeated Lady Glenmore, with surprise.

"Yes," rejoined Lord Glenmore, sternly; and taking it from beneath the papers, pointed to it.

"Oh! I remember now; I had totally forgotten it. But

one day, when I was writing, he came up to me. We had been talking, the evening before, of remembering people and their features in absence, and I had declared my inability to recall any one, however intimate, to my memory, when I did not see them; and then he said he could not bear me to forget him, and he would put his portrait in my *porte-feuille*, which I conclude he did; but indeed, indeed I have never looked at it or thought of it since;”—and she raised her eloquent eyes, streaming with tears, full in Lord Glenmore's face.

The latter, during the whole of what had passed, felt that his wife was only the victim of the system of that society in which she had been cast. He could not for a moment believe that the expression of that genuine feeling which had been displayed could have been assumed,—that the undisguised truth had not been elicited in every word that had fallen from Lady Glenmore's lips,—that she had been led away by the vanity of a designing man's attention, and during a season, *perhaps*, of neglect on his part.

How could he then, if his honour and her heart were still unpolluted, deal harshly by her? Lord Glenmore's views, on all subjects, were clear and decided; and from what he had elicited from Lady Glenmore, his purpose was fixed, provided she answered him satisfactorily on two points, and with the same ingenuous spirit, and the same conviction.—Turning to her, therefore, with much solemnity, he said,

“ Georgina, you have been foolish: I believe this to be the extent of your error. I, perhaps, have been unwise in trusting too much to your discretion. But before I can again repose confidence in you, you must first assure me, in the most solemn manner, that you have told me *all*,—that you have concealed no part of this transaction from me:—you must swear it.”

“ I swear,” exclaimed Lady Glenmore; and falling on her knees, once more raised her hands and eyes to heaven, in affirmation of her words, and in agony of feeling.

Lord Glenmore was deeply agitated. “ And then,” he continued, his voice faltering with emotion, “ you must promise me that you will break off all intercourse and acquaintance with that man.”

“ All, all!” she cried, embracing his knees; “ joyfully I will break it off,” and raising an imploring look of love up to his face.

"Voluntarily, freely," he continued, as he gazed at her.
"Yes, Glenmore," she repeated, with deep earnestness.
"What is he or his hated name to me, if you but love me? Only trust me, try me, and you will find how devotedly I am your own."

Lord Glenmore was deeply affected; and as she clung to his knees, raised her in his arms, and pressed her convulsively to his heart.

"*I will trust you, Georgina,*" he said, as he impressed a kiss on her forehead—the seal of peace; nor was it impressed in vain. "And now," he added, "you require repose. This has been a deep lesson to you and to myself. Go to your chamber, Georgina, and thank God, as I do, that you have been thus saved from degradation and misery."—Again Lady Glenmore flinging herself into those dear arms which no longer repelled her embrace, wept for some moments on his neck delicious tears of penitence and love.

Once more alone, Lord Glenmore reviewed all that had passed; and in the calm reflection of a strong mind saw at once the miserable cause, and the nearly fatal effects, of a mode of life, the awful dangers of which he had never till then questioned. He had the honesty to perceive in his own conduct much more to blame than in that of his young and inexperienced wife. His belief amounted to conviction of her innocence, even in regard to the imprudence into which she had been betrayed. A thousand times did he condemn his own mistaken course, and his too confiding nature, as the cause of all that had occurred. A thousand instances did he recall of his having placed Lady Glenmore in circumstances where a less virtuous nature than hers would have fallen a more easy sacrifice.

The delusion of the false system of society in which she had been cast was now unveiled, and a thousand proofs of the immorality and viciousness which marked the course of those with whom he had habitually lived now stared him in the face; and with a deep feeling of gratitude he raised the voice of thanksgiving to Heaven, that the mist of error had been dispelled in time to save her who was dearer to him than his own life, and in whose happiness his own was involved. How to break from the entanglements of a society which had produced these baneful results was a reflection of difficulty.

Lord Glenmore was too much a man of the world, and too good and just a person, to act hastily in such circumstances ; for he well knew that to do so would be only to draw down upon himself and his wife the animadversions of the world at large, and the rancour of those from whom he separated ; and in this his wife's character must suffer. It required, therefore, the calmness of repose, and the deliberation of a less agitated mind, to decide on the after-measures to be taken ; and with the determination of adopting such as might appear best suited to the circumstances of the case, he retired, at length, to rest.

CHAPTER XIV.

FINAL DEVELOPEMENT OF A DANGEROUS SYSTEM.

WHATEVER confidence Lord Glenmore felt in possessing the full and undivided affections of Lady Glenmore, yet the particulars of such a disclosure as had come to light, of her intimacy with Leslie Winyard, could not fail, for a long period, to throw a gloom on his existence : and gave birth to a feeling, that the happiness which he had hitherto contemplated as unclouded was now obscured by some of those shades which are incident to all human enjoyments, and which are wisely ordered to wean us, perhaps, from a world we might otherwise love too well.

Convinced, however, that Lady Glenmore had been timely saved from falling a prey to circumstances arising out of the nature of the society into which she was thrown, and which he could not help considering were in a great measure the result of his own want of forethought and care, he felt assured that the decision he had come to was as much his *duty*, as his heart told him it was his *desire*.

To withdraw Lady Glenmore from that circle was nevertheless no easy task. Habits of conventional dissipation are seldom broken through without producing a mutual aversion between the parties. From this feeling, on the part of her former associates, it was his anxious wish to guard Lady

Glenmore; for he felt that to a young and inexperienced heart there can be no greater temptation to return to error, than to be exposed to those sneers and contemptuous remarks which the world of folly is ever ready to apply when it finds itself tacitly reproved.

While, therefore, Lady Glenmore remained exposed, as she must of necessity be for a season, to the casual society of Lady Tenderden, Lady Tilney, and the rest of that party, it would have been impolitic, with the views Lord Glenmore entertained, for him to have adopted any very marked change in his own or Lady Glenmore's outward deportment towards them. But he laid a sure and better foundation of future propriety in the conduct of his wife, by developing to her the dangers and awful consequences which, now that his fears had been timely awakened, he saw existed in the mode of life and peculiar society in which they had hitherto taken a part.

Struck with dismay at the contemplation of the picture he drew, and while there was no reason to appeal further than to her own good sense, Lord Glenmore felt convinced that the veil had been seasonably removed from *her* eyes as well as *his own*; and that, with a conviction of the danger which surrounded her, and with affections firmly fixed upon himself, he might discard all fear for the future on *her* account. In regard to her acquaintance, however, with Mr. Leslie Winyard, a more decided line was necessarily taken; and although this step gave rise to some whispers among the younger and more licentious part of the society, and elicited innuendoes from Leslie Winyard himself, under which, with real baseness, he thought to conceal the mortification of his abrupt dismissal, yet the more prudent of the *coterie* rejoiced in the circumstance, as averting the danger of a *public scandal* which threatened them.

Among this number Lady Tilney was loud in dwelling on the fortunate *dénouement* of an affair which, had it terminated otherwise, might have been detrimental to the interests of the circle in which she reigned; and arrogated to herself the whole merit of having, by her good policy, been the means of bringing it to this conclusion:—a false and unhallowed presumption, thus to attribute to human agency alone, and human foresight, events which proceed from a higher source than this world's wisdom can reach! but

which is too common an error in minds where religion is not the abiding principle.

Neither Lady Tilney, however, nor any of the *coterie*, were aware of the determination of Lord and Lady Glenmore to withdraw themselves ultimately from their circle; an event which movements in the political world, as unexpected as they were generally deprecated, greatly facilitated, and of which Lord Glenmore failed not to take advantage, as much for the sake of his domestic peace, as for the maintenance of his political principles. Measures which he felt he never could consistently support were on the point of being brought forward by the head of the ministry; and with that frankness and decision of character which had marked his whole life, he sought permission to retire from public affairs, and resign the office which he held.

Aware of the importance of his support, the minister of the day long sought to retain him on his side; but no arguments of expediency could overcome the fixed principles of right and wrong by which Lord Glenmore was actuated; and he finally succeeded in liberating himself from the toils of an office which, since the late threatened overthrow of his domestic peace, he had found induced too great a sacrifice of more essential points of happiness. Equally rejoiced with Lord Glenmore was Lord Albert d'Esterre at this event, for in the present state of his mind he found mixing in public, which his official situation imposed upon him, a most irksome burden; and he hailed with satisfaction a circumstance which, as a natural consequence of Lord Glenmore's resignation, freed him also from the toils of office. The first favourable result that accrued from this change was, that it threw Lord Glenmore and Lord Albert more together; who, in the leisure of retirement, experienced the sweets of that steady friendship which is the offspring of mutual esteem.

In a proposal which, soon after these occurrences, Lord Glenmore made to Lord Albert, of taking advantage of their liberation to go abroad, the latter readily joined; not only as being his friend's wish, but also as one in which he would have sooner indulged himself, except for the pain he endured at the thought of quitting Lord Glenmore. All barriers to his wishes in this respect being removed, the arrangements for a foreign tour were soon completed; and leaving

the *coterie* astonished at the *mauvais ton* of their quitting London in the middle of *the season*, and when no one was at Paris, and no inducement could exist for a *séjour* abroad, according to their calculation, Lord Glenmore and Lord Albert were soon consigned to oblivion, and ceased to be subjects of conversation.

They, on their part, quitted London without one of those regrets so generally experienced by the young and gay when bidding adieu to so many seducing phantoms of pleasure—phantoms, however, whose fallacy they had too deeply proved, ever to permit a moment's power over them in future.

The reunited friends pursued their journey in the same route ; and although Lord Albert's heart was any thing but light, a degree of serenity was gradually restored to him in the calm of reflection, the interest of the scenes he passed through, and above all in that reflected ray of happiness which he caught from his friend.

A year in this manner had passed away, and Lord Glenmore had recovered that even cheerfulness which is a test of the heart's happiness, and which the assurance of Lady Glenmore's devotedness to himself, and total abandonment of all wish to re-enter scenes from which he had withdrawn her, were calculated to restore. It was at this period that the party found themselves at Naples : and here Lord Albert's proximity to that country of classic name which he had once before visited, and which again seemed to call him to the contemplation of all the interests and beauties which it ever retains, together with that spirit of restlessness, which is the concomitant of an unoccupied heart, tempted him once more to revisit Greece.

In fulfilling this wish, however, he remained some time undecided, from his averseness to quit the Glenmores ; but when Lady Glenmore's health at length prevented the possibility of their removing from Naples, he decided on resigning the society of his friends for a few months, and prepared for his departure. However lively his regret at the moment of separation, and however irksome his absence from Lord Glenmore might appear, Lord Albert's stay in Greece was prolonged far beyond his original intention ; for who, once having tasted the delights attendant on Grecian travel, can readily forego the charm it affords ? If there is earthly balm

for a wounded spirit, it is in the feelings and reflections which such scenes inspire.

In the correspondence that continued between Lord Glenmore, and Lord Albert d'Esterre, he found the former had quitted Italy, and intended to pass the winter at Munich. When, therefore, his own affairs called him imperatively back to England, he took his route through Germany; and arriving late at Munich, stopped there for the night, in order to enjoy a few hours society with the only persons who still, he believed, were solicitous to retain his friendship. The announcement of his arrival was quickly followed by his presence at the hotel inhabited by Lord Glenmore. The meeting and reception were such as may be imagined, though seldom realized, between friends so cordially united; and if it suffered any alloy, it was the contrasted loneliness of Lord Albert's heart with the domestic felicity of Lord Glenmore. But although he felt the pang of self-regret, he was not insensible to the reflected joy of Lord Glenmore's happiness.

His transient visit was soon followed by the declaration of his intended departure on the morrow. But who can tell what a day may bring forth? From this intention he was eagerly dissuaded by the joint entreaties of Lord and Lady Glenmore; and yielding to their solicitations, and the prospect of the pleasure of their society, rather than to the inducement they held out of a court festival that was to take place the following day, he gave a reluctant acquiescence to retard his journey, and promised his attendance at the Court.

On the morrow, Lord Albert arrived at the palace, but too late; and was obliged to hurry through the apartments, in order to be in time for his presentation. This formality gone through, he was leisurely retracing his way to rejoin the Glenmores, who stood in a distant part of the circle, when his eyes were attracted to a form which he thought he recognised, but so changed, so pale, so much taller than he had been used to recollect as the image of the person whom the features represented, that he stopped for a moment in doubt. But that moment was sufficient to make him remember all. It was Lady Adeline Seymour who stood before him. For a moment he paused, and was irresolute how to act. His head swam round, and every object in the room became one confused mass. He looked for a way to escape;

but escape there was none, without causing much ob-
tion, the circle was so closely drawn ; and he found he
inevitably proceed in the direction where this magic ph-
stood. He endeavoured to arm himself for the de-
trial ; but with every nerve trembling, and every pulse
ing, he was forced to move on. He endeavoured to
eyes on the ground, but, in despite of himself, they were
stantly raised to the object that so irresistibly attracted
As he drew nearer, he observed Lady Dunmelraise k-
on the arm of her daughter. Again he started, and g-
with uncontrollable emotion. The Court was breakin-
The current of the throng set in one way, and pressed
him till he found himself absolutely borne close to th-
beings whom, of all others, it caused him the most
agitation of mingled feelings to meet. "Lord Albert
terre" exclaimed Lady Dunmelraise, and courtseyin-
half smiled as she recognised him. He bowed in si-
unable to speak. Lady Dunmelraise continued to a-
him :—"Have you been long at Munich, Lord Alb-
"Yes—no—yes—no. I have been"— and he mu-
a few incoherent words that admitted of any interpre-
but which she did not understand.

"Adeline, dear !" she said, turning to her daughter, head had drooped, and whose eyes sought the ground, "line ! do you not recognise Lord Albert d'Esterre ?" Adeline bowed without speaking, or raising her head. was powerless. Lord Albert's eyes were fixed in stu-
amazement on her. The crowd had now congregated a-
them, and it was impossible for either party to move.
ul as this situation was, Lord Albert thought he read,
tremor of Lady Adeline's frame, a something indefinat-
deed, but which, nevertheless, breathed of tender re-
cence. In another minute, the glove and fan which she
in her hand dropped from her trembling hold.

Lord Albert hastened to recover them ; and, in prese-
them to her, the whole recollection of the scene at the
of London flashed vividly on his mind : the myrtle sprig
look that had accompanied the bequest of it to him, a-
turned to his remembrance ; and had it faded entirely
hers ? He ventured not to speak ; but in this act of
manners, while holding the fan by one end as she tou-
it at the other, there was a mutually tremulous vib-

that passed through it, which told him of *all that was thrilling* in her heart at the moment, and which instinctively conveyed to him a renovated gleam of hope. Under these feelings, Lord Albert, in his turn, stooped his head to hide the tear that started to his eye, as he acknowledged—for how could he do otherwise than acknowledge?—that *this* was not the feeling of one indifferent to him.

It needed, however, only a moment's reflection to repress the presumptuous joy which for an instant filled his breast; and, with wounds fresh opened, he sought the opportunity which a movement in the crowd afforded him to rush from the palace to his carriage. Thence he drove impetuously to his hotel, called his servants, gave orders for instant preparations for departure, and hastily changing his dress, and desiring his carriage to attend him at Lord Glenmore's hotel, proceeded thither.

He entered with excited feelings, and a spirit irritated by the most contradictory emotions, and half-inclined to reproach Lord Glenmore for having exposed him to the painful scene which he had just passed through. Lord Albert met him on the stair-case, that moment returned from Court. Lord Glenmore looked at him at first with astonishment, and then at his change of dress.

“Glenmore,” said Lord Albert, in a hurried tone, “I must speak to you;”—and as they entered his apartment, he continued, in agitation:

“Why have you exposed me to this scene? Why did you not tell me that she was here? I have met Adeline;”—and he sunk into a chair, unable to utter more.

“My dear d'Esterre,” Lord Glenmore replied, “forgive me. You must know how far it is from any wish of my heart to pain or agitate yours. That you should have met Lady Adeline under circumstances distressing to your feelings, you may believe, I deeply lament: that I knew she was resident here, it could never be my intention to conceal from you: but that your meeting will be ultimately productive of mutual happiness to you both (however agonizing at the moment), I cannot for an instant doubt.” Lord Albert paced the room in agitation.

“Hear me; only hear me, d'Esterre, for a few moments.” Lord Albert again cast himself into a seat.

“Let me tell you, then, quietly, that since we parted, and particularly since our residence in this place, Lady Adelind

has become the intimate friend of my wife. Her secret thoughts have been revealed to Georgina. Need I tell what these thoughts are ? They reveal an attachment the truest and most refined that ever warmed a heart, and that heart is wholly and unchangeably your own. Was it possible, d'Esterre, that, knowing you as I do, I should allow what I believe to be the truth to remain secret, and not inform my wife that your affections were in reality centred in Lady Adeline ? And again, as your friend, knowing, or, at least, surmising, all those unfortunate circumstances which had arisen to separate you, that I should not endeavour to clear up the misapprehension, and remedy the evil ? Was it, too, possible, would it have been the part of a real friend, had I deferred for an instant seeking to place every thing in its true light to Lady Dunmelraise ? I should, indeed, have been unworthy of the character, if, from a momentary fear of your displeasure, I had forborne to do so. This I have done, d'Esterre ;" — and Lord Glenmore added, half smiling, and extending his hand to him as he spoke, " and for this, as well as for the meeting that has just taken place, I feel you cannot *blame* me."

" You are all goodness," exclaimed Lord Albert mournfully. " But what then ?" he cried with gasping eagerness, " what can it all avail me ?"

" What then ! why this, d'Esterre—the crowning of your wishes, the fulfilment of your happiness. I found Lady Dunmelraise almost as much enlightened as to the circumstances which broke off your engagement with Lady Adeline as myself. and, in avowing this knowledge, she accompanied it with expressions of regret that she had not herself been more explicit on the subject to you.

" With this understanding of Lady Dunmelraise's sentiments, and the conviction of Lady Adeline's affections being wholly yours, have I acted wrong, even in apparent violation of your feelings, in bringing about this interview ? After all, the first meeting has been, perhaps, as little trying to both as could well be ; and it has, with this explanation, I hope, opened the way to a more delightful reverie still.—D'Esterre, I adjure you by our friendship, by your own happiness, trust to me, trust to Georgina, and suffer not this fortunate moment to escape ! Give way to the genuine impulse of your heart. Let not any false pride, any untimely fears, influence you ; but empower me, this very instant, to

go to Lady Dunmelraise, and prepare the way for your reception."

Lord Albert d'Esterre, with a sense of happiness too overpowering to admit of any distinct feeling, yielded up all the latent prejudices and pride of his nature, which Lady Dunmelraise's rejection still left rankling in his bosom ; and, overcome by the tender entreaties of Lord Glenmore, he at last convulsively exclaimed,

" Go, go, Glenmore ! but do not deceive me ; do not place me in any position unworthy of your friend." Lord Glenmore waited not an instant, but flew to Lady Dunmelraise, the happy messenger of happy tidings. The purpose of his mission was soon made known, and as soon acceded to ; and when Lord Albert, the victim of delusion, found himself once more in Lady Dunmelraise's presence, the cordial pressure of the hand, the expressions of pleasure at again meeting, the tearful eye, and soft intonation of voice, soon assured him that all the justice that could be done him had already taken effect in Lady Dunmelraise's mind ; and the half-broken, half-murmured sentences which he attempted in reply were interrupted by the latter calling to Lady Adeline Seymour from the adjoining room. As she came forward with downcast looks and trembling footstep, Lord Albert hastened towards her, took her hands in his, and as he pressed them to his lips, asked her " if she could forgive him ? "

In sounds almost inarticulate, she pronounced his name ; and as her head was bowed down, overcome with the agitation of such a moment, Lady Dunmelraise approached, pressed their united hands together, and blessed them as her children.

With what inebriation of happiness did Lord Albert quit this scene ! with what a cheered and gladdened spirit did he return to Lord Glenmore ! with what an overflowing spirit of thankfulness did he pour forth his acknowledgments to the friend who, under Providence, had restored him to happiness, and with such judicious zeal guided and counselled him to reach the goal !—For these feelings there are no words. To Lady Glenmore also he opened his whole soul, and condemned repeatedly his misapprehension of Adeline's conduct, and his own want of candour ; while he listened with rapturous delight to every fresh proof which fell from Lady Glenmore's lips, of Lady Adeline's love ;

though even in this, there was an anguish mingled with the joy, to think how little he had merited the devotion of such a heart. After some hours had passed, during which Lord Albert, in the delirium of his felicity, scarcely could persuade himself of the reality of a change which so short a time had wrought in his existence, he became calmer ; and looking back on the past, he could not but see the overruling hand of Providence in all that had befallen him.

The unthinking might call it a chance, which had opened up to him the real character of Lady Hamlet Vernon ; and, in the same mistaken levity, might have attributed to the same blind accident the serious reflections which this discovery brought in its train : and continuing in this error, they might ascribe to the same fortuitous power, that he had reached Munich, a desolate and forlorn being, to whom no object in life presented itself to cheer existence or stimulate exertion ; and that, now, how the evolution of a few hours had reversed the whole picture, and placed him on the summit of human happiness ! Yes, the unthinking and the hardened may ascribe all this to chance : but the wise and good know that *chance* is only another word for Providence ; and that in every turn of our lives, in every minutia which affects our existence here or hereafter, there is a mightier power to be acknowledged than any secondary cause can alone produce.

“ D’Esterre,” said Lord Glenmore, as the latter entered the apartment where he was sitting with Lady Glenmore, “ d’Esterre, do you know that your carriage has been waiting for hours at the door ?” and smiling as he added, “ I presume it may go back to your hotel, for I have to tell you that Lady Dunmelraise and Lady Adeline will be here directly.” Lord Albert looked his delighted thanks. “ And if you intend to make any toilette for dinner,” continued the former, “ there is no time to lose.” Lord Albert arose, pressed the hands of both his friends to his heart, and promised to return instantly.

As he descended the staircase, he saw his old servant Comtois, who held his travelling cloak. Lord Albert said, as he passed him, “ No, Comtois, no !” The former made a sign to the courier to mount. Lord Albert observed this and turning round, added, “ Comtois, I shall not set off to-day.”

“ No, milor ?” rejoined the latter with surprise, his

features catching a portion of the joy that gleamed from his master's face, and to which such an expression had long been a stranger. " *Milord, donc, a changé d'intention : il ne part pas.*"

" No, Comteis ; and I must dress as soon as possible, so go to my hotel." The servant hastened forward to execute these orders, with as much alacrity as Lord Albert had shewn in giving them ; and the grave tone of command to the courier to return with the carriage was changed to one almost of friendly familiarity, as he said, nodding to him, " *Luigi, nous ne partons pas. Vite à l'hôtel.*"

It would be vain to attempt to describe all that passed, all that was said and looked, when they met, between the now happy Lord Albert and Lady Adeline. Much time at Munich was not suffered to elapse, before arrangements were made for Lady Dunmelraise's and her daughter's return to England, whither they were accompanied by Lord Albert ; and when arrived there, their union was to take place as soon as possible. Lord and Lady Glenmore were entreated to return in time for the ceremony ; and the former, reassured by the two years' devotion and increasing attachment of his wife, now saw no reason for his prolonged stay on the continent.

Lord Albert d'Esterre, on his arrival in England, found some little difficulty in explaining satisfactorily to his father Lord Tresyllian's mind all the contradictory circumstances which had led to Lady Adeline's rejection of him, and in regaining his approbation of their union ; but the wounded pride of the latter was at length appeased by the most satisfactory details of all the occurrences, and beyond this Lord Tresyllian had little feeling. The marriage took place a few days after the arrival of the Glenmores, and for nine days formed the subject of wonder and conversation in the *coterie* of the exclusives, in which Lord Albert had so nearly made a wreck of happiness.

With this circle, a few excepted, no renewal of intimacy took place, either on the part of Lord Albert or Lord Glenmore. They found, by public report, that the fate of some who had figured in it had been such as their course must sooner or later have brought them to. Mr. Leslie Winyard had married, a few months after Lady Glenmore's departure, an heiress of immense wealth ; who, dazzled with

the idea of obtaining the *entrée* into that circle of *ton* in which he moved, and betrayed by the delusive hope of reclaiming him from its more destructive follies by her love and devotion, had given him her hand, her fortune, and her happiness. Enormous, however, as was her wealth, it was soon dissipated in the payment of his previous debts, and the endless, extravagances into which he plunged: and in eighteen months after their union she had died of a broken heart; having lived to witness the foul desertion of the man for whom she had sacrificed every thing, and who was then living, in open violation of all religious and moral feeling, with a recent victim of his seduction.

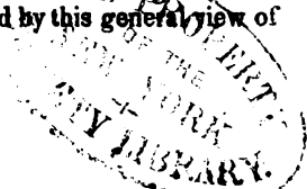
Lady Glenmore shuddered as she heard these details, and lifted up her hands in silent *thanksgiving* to the Almighty for having been preserved from so awful a fate. As regarded Lord Albert, if any thing could have been requisite to confirm him in the proper estimate he had formed of Lady Hamlet Vernon's character, and the danger he had escaped, he would have found it in *her* subsequent history; for, pursuing the same course of intrigue in which she had so nearly involved him, she at length fell into the toils spread for others, and became the dupe of her own vicious folly. Brought to a situation in which the fruits of her conduct would soon become glaringly apparent, and which, if discovered, must have driven her from that circle where every thing depended on avoiding *detection*, and scorned by the man she had sought to inveigle, she was obliged, as a last resource, to veil her infamy by a marriage with Mr. Foley, with whom she lived at present on those terms of mutual unhappiness which would naturally be the consequence of such a union.

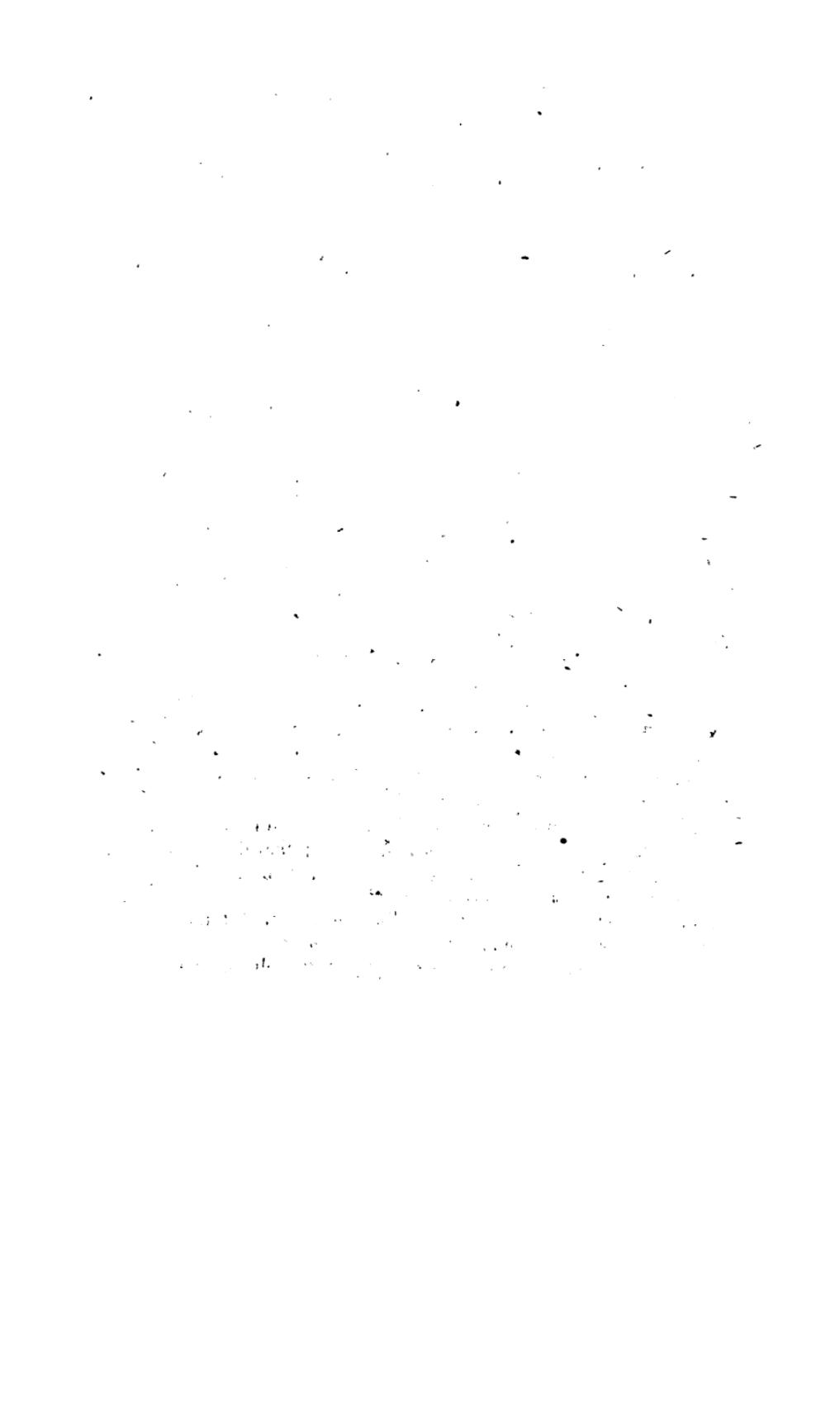
Some few there were of the *coterie*, who had been timely warned, and, seeing the tendency of the course they were pursuing, had withdrawn from the magic sphere to better and more stable pursuits. Among these was Lord Gascoigne, whose quick intelligence and clear head, accompanied by a goodness of heart which he often concealed under a show of levity, had preserved him from losing himself entirely in the vortex of folly. Lord and Lady Baskerville, too, had seen their error—an error more of the head arising from the contamination of example, than of the heart; and who now lived as became their station, and in the way which

bade a fair promise for virtuous happiness ; while others of the number continued their heartless round, without coming to any open disgrace, and yet without making any reform. Among these, again, was Lady Tilney, who continued still the *sor-disant* queen of *ton*, blind to the approach of that period when her empire must yield, in despite of all her strenuous efforts to uphold it, to that of some fresh rising beauty ; and still insensible to the dreadful vacuum which in the decline of life, without the sincerity of friendship and the resources of a well-cultivated mind—above all, without religious trust to cheer and gild the setting sun of life—must be the miserable portion of every human creature.

One *distingué* member of the *coterie* was on the eve of leaving it and the country, not willingly, but from imperative circumstances. The Comtesse Leinsengen, who had for years played the part of a crafty *diplomatiste* with the government, as well as endeavoured to extend her rule over the circles of fashion, had found herself at last foiled in her political objects : and too proud to bear this defeat, she had announced her departure as decisive ; an event that to the minister afforded a feeling of triumph, and no less of secret joy in the breast of Lady Tilney, who had found in her "*dear friend*" her most dreaded rival and pertinacious opponent. Oh ! what a melancholy reflection to think, if the Comtesse Leinsengen ever did think on any thing beyond views of self-interest and the gratification of self-love, that an intimacy with those with whom she had lived for so many years had been productive of no one friendship that deserved the name, and given birth to no one regret when she was about to leave them probably for ever !

Such, however, would be found to be the case with almost every individual forming part of this circle, where selfishness, heartlessness, and cold over-reaching, alternately swayed every action ; passions which, when delineated, at some future day, as they appear exemplified in individual characters on the scene, will give additional strength to the moral lesson intended to be conveyed by this general view of EXCLUSIVE SOCIETY.







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